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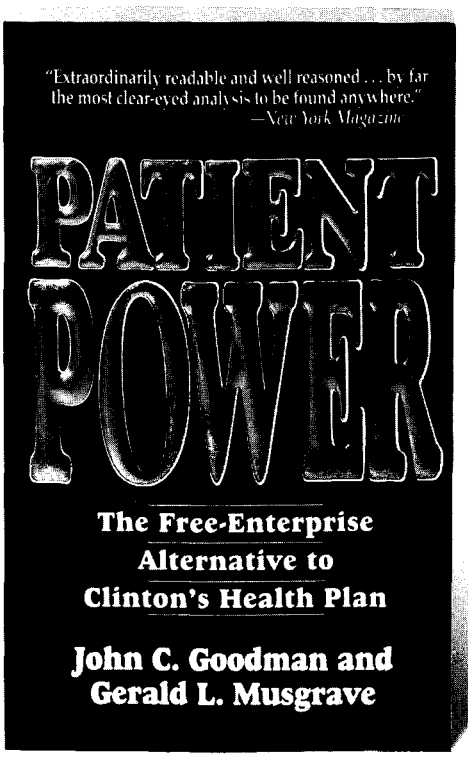
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

Round three

To the editors:

I had hoped that my description of the Clinton health bill would encourage a nationwide debate on the content of the bill and what it will mean when you need medical treatment. The two responses in THE NEW REPUBLIC (February 14) are disappointing. Michael Kinsley concedes at the outset that he has not read the bill. How then can he offer guidance to readers who want to make an informed judgment about it?

The other respondents, Theodore Marmor and Jerry Mashaw, challenge my statement that "if the bill passes, you will have to settle for one of the low-budget health plans selected by government." But anyone who reads the bill will see that it expressly prohibits Americans from buying the kinds of extensive, high-quality health plans that many now choose.

The bill requires you to buy basic health coverage from the limited choices offered by the regional alliance where you live. It will be illegal to go outside the system and buy a basic health plan you prefer, even after you pay the mandatory premium (see pages 15 and 244 of the bill). Will you be restricted to low-budget health plans? Yes.

Under the bill, a National Health Board will decide what each regional alliance can spend on health plans, and will set a ceiling on what the average plan in the region can cost. To sell health coverage in a region, insurers and HMOs must stay under the ceiling (pages 984-987, 990, 995).

In addition, the bill outlaws any plan that costs more than 20 percent above the average plan in a region (page 132). The goal is to limit what every American is allowed to pay for health coverage. Limiting what you can spend on a health plan limits the money in the pot to pay for your medical care when you are sick.

In conclusion, Marmor and Mashaw's statement that the Clinton bill merely "would highlight which plans are more expensive" and provide "incentives to choose lower-cost plans" is untrue. The Clinton bill compels you to buy one of the low-budget health plans offered by your regional alliances, and outlaws all other choices. Before commentators advocate the Clinton health bill, they owe it to their audience, at the least, to read it.

What makes the Clinton bill different from any of the other Democratic or Republican reform bills is that it gives the government control over your personal medical care. Only the Clinton bill limits the medical care you can get and what you can pay for it. The other proposals in Congress attack the worst abuses by health insurance companies, reform liability laws that force doctors to practice wasteful, defensive medicine and devise ways to make insurance affordable if you don't work for a large company. All these proposals could be expanded to provide universal coverage, if the American people want to pay for it.

ELIZABETH MCCAUGHEY
Manhattan Institute
New York, New York

Cavalier and casual

To the editors:

The iconography of Shiva as Nataraja is held to be sacred, revered and admired by several million Hindus as well as art lovers of other faiths since the seventh century. More than 800 million Hindus of the world deserve tolerance and respect of their beliefs, just like the beliefs of any other faith. Your cavalier and casual use of the concept of the "Shiva as Nataraja" image (Cover, January 10 & 17) displays insensitivity to other people's beliefs—unless they are intolerant enough to issue *fatwa*s to kill writers and journalists. Let us see if you dare to publish anything as insensitive and scurrilous about the beliefs of Islam.

K. R. RAO
Cedar Falls, Iowa

To the editors:

Michael Lewis's fascinating portrait of George Soros ("The Speculator," January 10 & 17) brought to mind a TNR Notebook item of some years back concerning Amy Carter's collegiate anti-war activities. In it you uncharacteristically begged from your cynical readers a little indulgence: sure, demonstrating against military recruiters might seem a little naive, but would we all rather that Carter were joining her classmates in preparing to become the best young investment banker she can be?

Perhaps I can supply a similar sentiment for Lewis: Whatever the alleged personal foibles or theoretical eccentricities of Soros, would we really rather he were spending his money on vacation homes and artwork than on building up the civil societies of Central and Eastern Europe? Can anyone name a millionaire who is devoting his discretionary resources to greater social good?

RUSSELL PITTMAN
Takoma Park, Maryland

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Born in the USA

To the editors:

Hanna Rosin's article on America's ethnic identification dilemma pays scant attention to the political manipulation inherent in the "white" census category ("Boxed In," January 3). This classification exists to provide descendants of Europeans an opportunity to declare themselves a majority despite obvious inconsistencies.

For example, do Arabs belong in this category? Jews? Turks? Sicilians? What about a child with seven white great-grandparents and one black one? The more you think about it, the sillier racial classification gets. We need to end this national preoccupation and decrease the census choices to three: (1) Born in the U.S.?, (2) Mother born in the U.S.? and (3) Father born in the U.S.?—followed by a space for the country of origin of those not born in the United States. Despite protests from organizations who represent people of color, the proper place to battle discrimination is in the courtroom not on the census form.

KEN WIBECAN
Lynwood, California

Nonengineer

To the editors:

I just spent $900 to replace my G.E. refrigerator after the compressor failed, a part I now learn from your January 24 cover story ("Dies Ira" by Jacob Weisberg) was designed by nonengineer Ira Magaziner.

No longer content to inflict his peculiar mix of hyperactivity and sophistry on large corporations and small countries, now Magaziner wants to turn the American people into guinea pigs for his health care theories. I hope someone stops this supergenius before the major organs in my body start konking out like my refrigerator compressor.

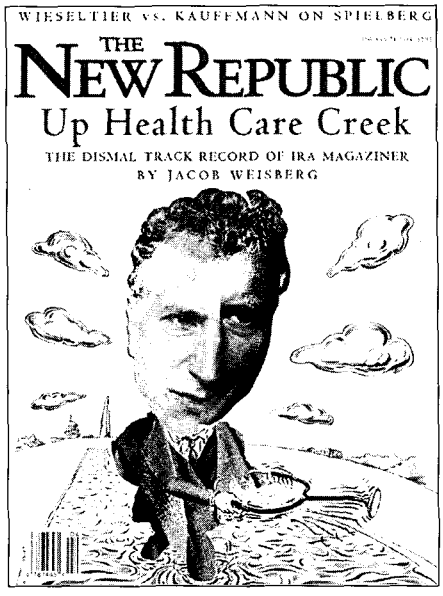
ROBERT SIMON
Columbus, Ohio

To the editors:

Jacob Weisberg's article on Ira Magaziner did not provide an accurate portrayal of Magaziner's health care reform leadership; nor did it reflect an understanding of what it really takes to design substantive policy in an area as complicated and inbred as health care.

I served as one of the advisers on the health care working group. Weisberg's examples of Magaziner's leadership style do not reflect my experience. Of course I had all my colleagues' home telephone numbers. We consulted and met all the time to develop reform options. Magaziner's office did produce a regular schedule of meetings. Such an administrative process was necessary to ensure broad participation. It was not an attempt to limit participation. The complexity of the working group process—so many people, meetings and policy options—surely stems in part from the complexity of the health care problem itself.

More fundamentally, however, Weisberg missed the crucial policy-making point. This country is confronted by a whole series of domestic problems—health care, crime and welfare—that we don't have good answers for. Policies tried in the past have not worked. Many of the proposed policies by interest groups are too narrow or too self-serving. Our universities appear increasingly disengaged from the real challenges faced by our society.



In this environment, we need policymakers who have the intellect and courage to break the mold. Otherwise, we get outdated, warmed over and unworkable policies. In designing the health care plan, Magaziner asked members of the working group to prepare policy options that were not limited by past failures, previous proposals or today's definition of what is politically acceptable. Instead, he wanted the best ideas in order to create the best, workable policy.

LOIS QUAM
St. Paul, Minnesota

Infuriating

To the editors:

I've never read a more infuriating letter than the one from Alan Berkenwald complaining about the ink TNR gives to homosexuality and gay rights (Correspondence, January 24). Like most readers, I suppose, I cannot work up an interest in every single one of your articles. But when I get tired of reading about, say, the reconstruction of Eastern Europe, I would hardly write you to say that some of my best friends are Hungarian but I don't want to read another word about Eastern Europeans.

For gay men like me who refuse to live in a gay ghetto, TNR is the only regular source of sensible political discourse about gay rights and homosexuality. The gay press generally is so parochial that it fails to see how gay issues fit into the larger context. Most gay and lesbian academic writing is filled with ideological rhetoric that strikes me as hopelessly irrelevant. For the past couple of years TNR has talked about the real issues facing gay men and lesbians—and, yes, all those straight people out there who delude themselves into thinking that homophobia doesn't hurt them, too. Thanks for providing a forum for these issues, and please keep it up.

JOHN H. BODDIE
Greensboro, North Carolina

To the editors:

I was amused at the reader who complained there was too much coverage of the gay rights struggle in TNR. In the four most recent issues, which I scanned for articles about gay and lesbian issues, of sixty-eight articles, poems, etc., the only ones mentioning gay issues were the two correspondences in the January 24 issue and the review of *Philadelphia*, which can hardly be considered slanted since virtually every movie column covered that. Assuming at least 7.5 percent of readership is gay or lesbian, you are not presenting *enough* material on these issues. People have no idea how comfortable they are with their prejudices.

EDWARD O. NIX, M.D.
Tucker, Georgia

Rather strongly

To the editors:

You guys inadvertently pulled a small boner in the January 3 issue. Stuart Schoffman's "Golan Postcard" implies rather strongly that Hamat Gader is part of the Golan Heights. It isn't. It was part of one of three Israeli-Syrian demilitarized zones that were set up "without prejudice to sovereignty" in 1949. "Without prejudice to sovereignty" in this case means Israeli sovereignty, because Hamat Gader (formerly Al-Hammah, or, on some maps, Al-Himmah) was part of Mandatory Palestine after the final 1923 border adjustments were made, as was the territory in all three demilitarized zones.

ADAM GARFINKLE
Foreign Policy Research Institute
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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FROM WASHINGTON

A rat's patootie

"Most people don't give a rat's patootie" about his role in the Iran-contra scandal, says Virginia Senate candidate Oliver North. I'm not sure what a patootie is, but I know a rat when I smell one. Does the Republican party? So far the party leadership, national and state, has taken no position on the possibility that a proven and brazen, unapologetic lawbreaker might be the GOP's Senate nominee. Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour has been silent. A spokesman says the RNC never expresses a preference in intraparty races. Virginia Governor George Allen says he will support whomever the party nominates at its convention in June.

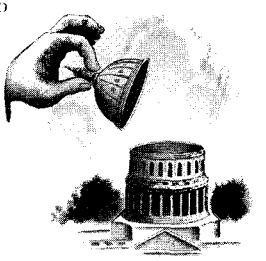
That sounds democratic—small "d"—but it won't do. The Republican leadership was more than happy to dissociate itself from the racist David Duke, even after he won the party's nomination for governor of Louisiana in 1991. Some candidates are considered beyond the pale. The question is whether Ollie North fits in this category. By striking a posture of impartiality, Republican leaders are saying that Ollie North is an acceptable representative of their party. Among leading Republicans only Virginia's other senator, John Warner, has declared that North is unfit to serve. For this, Warner is being pilloried as disloyal.

North's position is that he was "completely exonerated" of criminal wrongdoing when the Court of Appeals vacated his convictions for lying to Congress, destroying evidence and accepting an illegal bribe. This is flatly wrong. The Appeals Court held that witnesses in North's trial might have been affected by North's widely publicized congressional testimony, for which he had been promised immunity from prosecution. But nothing in the court's ruling implied that the evidence used to convict North was inaccurate or untrustworthy.

So North benefited from one of those "technicalities" conservatives ordinarily hate so much because they allow criminals to go free in deference to some other policy consideration. That's fine. As a liberal, I of course love those technicalities. But they do not require us to pretend that the criminal is not a criminal.

Indeed, because of the grant of immunity, the jury was never even allowed to consider North's own testimony directly. In that testimony he openly boasted of various crimes (knowing that the more he put on-the-record in immunized testimony, the less he could be convicted of). According to Independent Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh's final report:

> For six days North admitted to having assisted the contras during the [legal] prohibition on U.S. aid, to having shredded and removed from the White House official documents, to having converted traveler's checks for his personal use, to having participated in the creation of false chronologies of the U.S. arms sales, to having lied to Congress and to having accepted a home security system ... and then fabricating letters regarding payments for the system.



As Walsh's report makes clear, a true legal reckoning of the crimes of North and the other Iran-contra conspirators was thwarted by more than just the problem of immunized testimony. The Reagan administration refused to declassify documents North claimed to need for his defense, making prosecution on the central conspiracy charge impossible. Ollie's own "shredding party" and other destruction of evidence probably covered up crimes of various sorts. And lying and convenient lapses of memory by other witnesses didn't help.

The Walsh report plunges us into a nostalgic world of '80s arcana. Did the Boland Amendment—forbidding government aid to the contras—apply to the National Security Council? Walsh points out that Ollie was, in any event, an employee of the Defense Department merely detailed to the NSC. The question remains whether the Boland Amendment carried criminal sanctions. The question does not remain, however, whether this man who wants to make the laws knowingly and willfully violated that one.

North would like to spin the whole Iran-contra prosecution as a liberal vendetta against Reaganism. His campaign adviser, Richard Viguerie, says his campaign pitch will be, "imagine the look on the faces of the senators who tried to destroy the conservative, anti-Communist movement" when they find Ollie among them. North himself told *The New York Times* he deserves credit for freeing the hostages and bringing democracy to Nicaragua.

Republicans should keep in mind, therefore, that whatever North was up to, it wasn't exactly a defense of Reaganite principles. At least according to Reagan himself, whose own defense has always been that he was ignorant of North's activities. Reagan's Iran-contra lawyer, Peter Wallison, had a piece in *The Washington Post* the other day wittily titled, "IRAN-CONTRA: THE BUTLERS DID IT."

To be sure, this is just a continuation of the infuriatingly successful Iran-contra round-robin cover-up technique, in which the higher-ups blamed the lower-downs and the lower-downs blamed the higher-ups, while each group winked at the other. But leaving legality aside (as Ollie and company so happily did), what about the central act of the scandal: trading arms for hostages? North has brilliantly spun this as some sort of macho heroic enterprise, opposed only by limp-wristed liberals. In fact, it was a craven pandering to terrorism that went against everything Reagan claimed to stand for.

As for the Nicaraguan contras, leaving legality aside once again, the case is more complicated. But when Congress finally cut off contra aid for good after North's escapade was exposed, Reagan and company claimed that whatever happened next in Nicaragua was on the consciences of contra aid *opponents*. When what happened next was a democratic election, they were quick to change their story and claim credit. Subsequently, on alternate days when things don't look so good in Nicaragua after all (Sandinistas still influential), conservatives revert to the traditional formula.

Oliver North is favored to win the Virginia Republican Senate nomination. His only opponent is Jim Miller, a decent, principled, but uncharismatic former Reagan budget director. This poses a genuine dilemma for the Republican hierarchy. Unfortunately, they don't even seem to be agonizing over it—let alone coming up with the right answer.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 21, 1994

JUSTICE, NO PEACE

In Washington, where the clash of personalities is often mistaken for the clash of ideas, the resignation of Deputy Attorney General Philip Heymann has provoked breathless accounts of crisis at the Justice Department. "The resignation—whether sought or voluntary—has come as a surprise even to Mr. Heymann's close friends and at a time that could hardly be less propitious for an administration longing for at least one spell of sustained positive news," huffed *The Washington Post.* In fact, Heymann's resignation had been quietly predicted by administration officials for months; and it represents a welcome opportunity for a department whose problems have more to do with the White House than with Attorney General Janet Reno.

Heymann, for all his good intentions, found himself in an untenable position in Washington: regarded as more of an administrator than a scholar by his faculty colleagues at Harvard, he was regarded as more of a scholar than an administrator by congressional Democrats, who never quite forgave him for his earlier Washington stint investigating their role in ABSCAM. His credibility eroded still further after he confessed to the *Post* in November that he was unable to keep track of amendments to the crime bill because "the Senate was moving so fast and making changes so quickly."

No one who studied Janet Reno's disengaged management style in Florida could have expected her to be any more hands-on in Washington; and the honest but simplistic attorney general has neither the ability nor the inclination to administer the 95,000 employees of the Justice Department herself. She needs a competent, politically sophisticated deputy, trusted by the White House and Congress and skilled in the byzantine ways of the capital. The newly appointed Jamie Gorelick fits the bill nicely; and we trust she will help the department recover some of the bureaucratic momentum it lost in its first year.

But an efficient bureaucracy is no substitute for a legal philosophy. The Justice Department, despite the press hype, is not in crisis: after a year, there have been no scandals; and Reno deserves credit for a series of modest policy changes that have helped raise morale. In October, for example, she signed new guidelines that give federal prosecutors greater discretion in plea bargaining than they had during the Bush administration, where they were required to charge the most serious crime possible. Yet it is also impossible, after a year, to say precisely where the administration stands on major questions of legal policy: civil rights enforcement, the EEOC, the environment, judicial appointments and, most important, crime.

If there's blame to be assigned for this unexpected vacuum, we're inclined to point at the White House. President Clinton chose Reno because of her gender and her success at winning elections, and then dismissed her most sensible ideas, such as reforming mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent offenders, because they are unpopular on Capitol Hill. The White House also decided, rather than submitting a serious crime bill of its own, to endorse the most draconian measures Senate Republicans and Democrats could propose. The administration has surrounded Reno with a cohort of cronies, from L. D. Acheson to Sheila Anthony to Webb Hubbell, who were chosen for their ties to the president and Hillary Rodham Clinton rather than for their ideas.

The philosophical vacuum is apparent elsewhere, too. Thirty-seven percent of jobs requiring Senate confirmation at Justice are still vacant—because aside from the superficial criteria of "diversity," Bill Clinton has provided no substantive vision of the kind of department he wants to advise him. The appointment of Deval Patrick to head the civil rights division is another example of this: Clint Bolick's predictable fulminations against Patrick as a "quota clone" notwithstanding, Patrick seems, in fact, to be a highly competent establishment lawyer whose philosophy of civil rights enforcement is not so much radical as opaque. He's a cipher, not a revolutionary.

It's ironic that an administration of lawyers has turned out to be not very interested in law. Those who predicted the Justice Department would become a subsidiary of the Children's Defense Fund guessed wrong. Instead, the department is full of well-meaning political innocents who do not stand for much of anything when it comes to legal policy. This does not add up to a crisis. But it does add up to drift. And it isn't Janet Reno's fault, either. It's the president's. •

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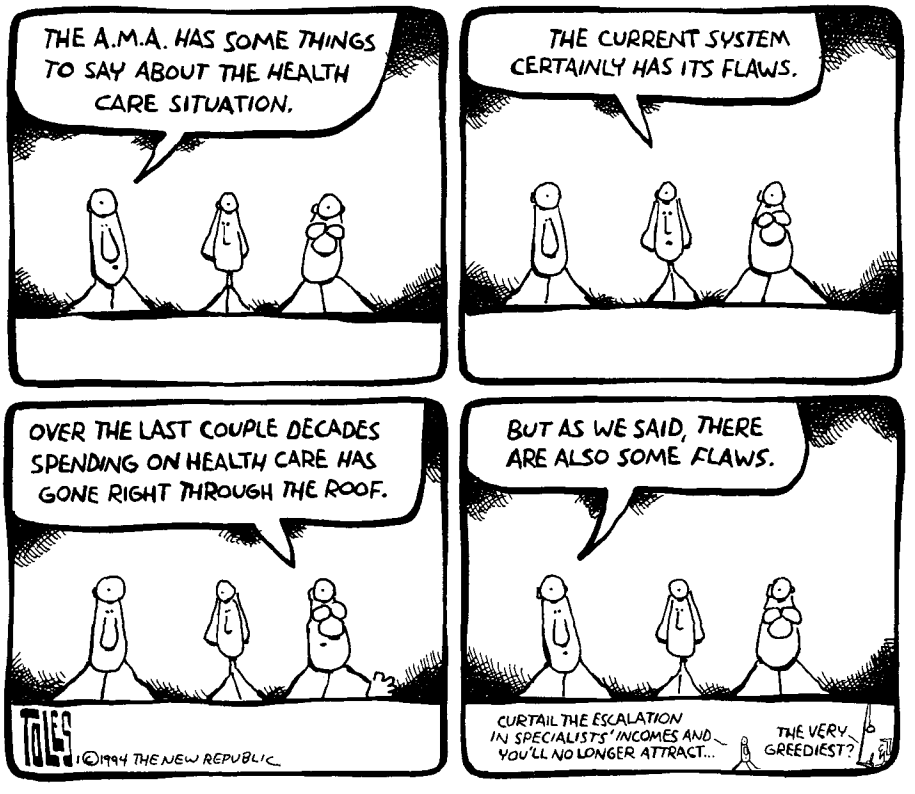
NOTEBOOK

HAVING A COW: The most interesting thing about the Clinton administration's ten-page reply to Elizabeth McCaughey's recent article in TNR, "No Exit," (February 7) was its tone. McCaughey will respond at length to the substantive parts of the administration's critique in TNR next week, but she will not accuse the administration of "blatant lies" or willful distortion, as the administration has accused her. One of the obvious merits of McCaughey's article was that it provided page references for every part of the bill it analyzed, so that readers could check things for themselves in puzzling out what this immensely complicated legislation could mean. This is hardly the technique of someone attempting to "lie" or to pull the wool over anyone's eyes. This was not TNR's intention, either. Although our own preference for a version of the Cooper plan is well-known, we have run several articles over the last few months—from, among others, Paul Starr, Walter Zelman, Harris Wofford and Michael Kinsley—defending the administration's proposal. The point is to provoke as honest a debate as possible about the choices the Clinton bill (and others) offer us. The McCaughey article was part of that discussion. To continue the process, why not have a public debate between Ira Magaziner and Elizabeth McCaughey on the details of the plan? TNR would be delighted to host such a forum and we hereby extend an invitation to Magaziner to take part in it.


THE A.M.A. HAS SOME THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE HEALTH CARE SITUATION.
THE CURRENT SYSTEM CERTAINLY HAS ITS FLAWS.
OVER THE LAST COUPLE DECADES SPENDING ON HEALTH CARE HAS GONE RIGHT THROUGH THE ROOF.
BUT AS WE SAID, THERE ARE ALSO SOME FLAWS.
TOLES ©1994 THE NEW REPUBLIC
CURTAIL THE ESCALATION IN SPECIALISTS' INCOMES AND YOU'LL NO LONGER ATTRACT...
THE VERY GREEDIEST?

BILL AND GERRY: According to R. W. Apple Jr. of *The New York Times*, President Clinton overruled his own State Department and London embassy staff in giving Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams a temporary visa to enter the United States. Clinton's reason was twofold: to appease Senators Kennedy and Moynihan, whose support he needs in his health care battle; and to help the "peace process" in Northern Ireland. We have no idea whether Moynihan is likely to change his mind about the scope of health care alliances because of Clinton's support for Sinn Fein, the "political" arm of the IRA; but we do know the peace process was mortally wounded by the Adams visa. By giving Adams this media coup, the administration has undermined the Irish and the British government's peace efforts. Both Dublin and London are prepared to talk to Adams formally if he will renounce violence (à la Arafat) and accept, as both Dublin and London do, the right of the unionist majority to determine its own future. But this is precisely what Adams still refuses to do. (Before the visa was issued, Adams said on television, "I want to bring an end to the Irish Republican Army, to be part of taking the gun out of Irish politics." He added, however, that he could not renounce violence because "it would be intellectually and morally wrong for me personally.") In New York, he continued to support violence. By his actions, Bill Clinton has strengthened the hand of the proponents of murder as a political weapon, undercut those Irish Republicans eager for a peaceful solution and made it less likely that there will be a breakthrough for peace in Ireland. Not bad going for a few small favors on the health care package.

LOCAL NEWS:

JEWISH BULLETIN OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Quake claims Jewish lives, property

(Thanks to Ben Wildavsky, San Francisco, California.)

WHITE MEN CAN'T RHYME:
"It costs twice more to send a child to jail than to send a child to Yale."—Jesse Jackson, as quoted in *The Hartford Courant*, October 21, 1992

"It costs as much to keep a convict in prison as to send him to Yale, for heaven's sake"—A. M. Rosenthal, *The New York Times*, January 28, 1994 •

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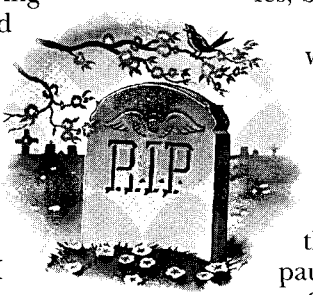
AFTER YOU'VE GONE

ZVIAD EGG

By Simon Sebag Montefiore

Never did an unluckier man aspire to the bloody mantle of dictator than ex-President Zviad Gamsakhurdia of Georgia, whose New Year's Eve suicide ends, at 54, a bizarre career. Gamsakhurdia was the longtime dissident professor elected the first president of Georgia. Within six months his tyranny and apparent lunacy provoked the revolt that overthrew him. For the next two years he rebelled against the government of Eduard Shevardnadze and finally went too far and fell on his sword.

The first time I met Gamsakhurdia, I thought he looked exactly like the actor Peter Sellers playing the part of the crazed dictator of a small, wild Caucasian republic. He had a little mustache and the saddest eyes, but they were illuminated with the flickering energy of madness. He was slight, tall, gray-haired, deep-voiced, elegant, like an aging gigolo wilting at a tea dance. Initially, I presumed rumors of his madness were exaggerated by his critics, but when I knew him better, I knew better.



Born in 1939, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the son of Georgia's most famous novelist this century, Konstantin Gamsakhurdia. His father was a rabid nationalist who believed Georgia was the bastion of Christian civilization and ancient wisdom: little Zviad was its future king. Konstantin was also the favorite of Stalin's sinister secret police chief, Lavrenti Beria, also a Georgian. Even at the height of the purges, Beria let the novelist parade around dressed in medieval Georgian robes. Young Zviad became a professor fluent in English, French and Russian, and translated Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and T. S. Eliot's poetry into Georgian.

But his real fame came as Georgia's leading dissident. He was first arrested at 17 and was persecuted until he was elected president. In 1978, as a member of Amnesty International, he was sentenced to five years in a labor camp. But here his record as a dissident becomes fishy. He wept on T.V. to say: "Bourgeois propaganda seized upon my mistakes!" and was pardoned with the return of his grand family home.

In the October 1990 elections, he led the Round Table coalition to victory; in April 1991 he won the presidency of independent Georgia with an 87 percent majority. Then things began to go horribly wrong. Within three months, he contrived to so alienate his prime minister, his army, the Russians, his fellow intellectuals and his Parliament that they turned against him. He declared Georgia was "at war with Russia." He offended minorities by saying, "Georgia for the Georgians." And he arbitrarily arrested his opponents.

The president was besieged in his Parliament building when I witnessed his fall in December 1991. Outside, chilly-breathed harridans, worshipers of Zviad's doom-laden charms, ruthlessly fly-swatted opponents in the face. Macho, but hopelessly slack, freebooters struck poses with their Kalashnikovs. My conversation with him went as follows:

"Are you the manifestation of Georgia?" I asked. "That would be boasting," he said, "but on the other hand, 87 percent of Georgians think so." "And 87 percent of Georgians can't be wrong," I joked. "Precisely." "What about the opposition?" "They are bandits." "But the chief rebel was prime minister until last week," I said. "This is true. I didn't realize his banditry until later. Initially, he impressed me." "He believes in democracy," I said. "He lies. He doesn't believe in anything. He wants to be president. He is fighting for my armchair!" "When will you create a free press?" I asked. "It *is* free." "But it only shows you, not the opposition." "Yes, but the opposition wants to broadcast lies!"

Then I asked him about Vadja Adamia, who was the Georgian general fighting the Ossetians as well as Gamsakhurdia. He hesitated then answered without irony: "He is a killer of children aged 9."

I asked if this monster only killed children aged exactly 9. "Like I said," snapped the president. "He is a killer of children." He paused. "Children aged 9."

On January 7, 1992, Zviad fled to neighboring Chechenya with 100 Zviadists. His lifelong enemy, Shevardnadze, returned and was elected president with a 92 percent majority. In exile, Zviad ranted about conspiracies but did not dare intervene again until Shevardnadze himself was besieged in the rebellious Abkhazia province last September. Gamsakhurdia claimed he was returning to support great Georgia but when Shevardnadze's troops retreated, the Zviadists arrested them and stole their arms, including thirty tanks, which the ex-president used to conquer western Georgia.

Most Georgians were appalled by this act of treason. Shevardnadze turned the tables by joining the Commonwealth of Independent States and winning Russian military aid, and Zviad's freebooting forces collapsed. Gamsakhurdia was faced with the choice of fleeing or fighting. Typically, he did both: first, he fled back to Chechenya. Then he returned to die in the fray like the Georgian knights of yore, whose heroic, ironclad ranks he so yearned to join.

He was married with two sons.

SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE is a frequent TNR contributor. This is the first in an occasional series of honest obituaries.

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GERGEN, GERGEN, GONE

By Fred Barnes

Notice the name that's missing. The core group at the White House to push President Clinton's health reform plan through Congress consists of senior aide George Stephanopoulos, health adviser Ira Magaziner, congressional liaison Pat Griffin and Harold Ickes, the new deputy chief of staff. But no David Gergen, the presidential counselor. Gergen has arguably done more than any other aide to advance the Clinton presidency, yet he's been cut out of the administration's most important initiative. Well, not cut out entirely. He'll offer advice from the sidelines. But, though he was a key player in the budget and NAFTA victories last year, he won't be devising daily strategy on health care.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The reason is simple. Gergen and Hillary Rodham Clinton, the architect of the health plan, don't agree on the issue. Gergen is far more free market-oriented on health care than the First Lady. He had no influence in the drafting of the Clinton plan. And last fall, when Rodham Clinton and White House officials were trashing Democratic Representative Jim Cooper of Tennessee, author of a rival proposal, Gergen kept his line of communication open to Cooper (as did Mack McLarty, Clinton's chief of staff). The result is that Gergen is now working on crime, which is important to the president, but not as important as health care.

The Gergen rift is significant. The White House staff under Clinton has been amazingly free of the factionalism that plagued the Bush and Reagan staffs. There has been nothing to rival the wars between Jim Baker's pragmatists and Edwin Meese's ideologues that took place during the Reagan years. Still, it was inevitable Gergen would run into trouble. He's a moderate who voted for Clinton but didn't work on the campaign. Most staffers are liberals who did. Gergen also worked for three Republican presidents (Nixon, Ford, Reagan). And he has a reputation for leaking.

Now, many staffers blame Gergen for virtually every unflattering quote in the press from a White House or administration official. He's accused (not to his face) of violating what's known as the "Stephanopoulos rule." It holds that no one should say anything to reporters, on the record or off, that is critical of another administration official. The rule has been broken only rarely. (In talking to me, Gergen has never violated it.) In fact, it often works to Gergen's benefit when other aides discuss him. Asked about Gergen's absence from health care, Jeff Eller, who runs the project's war room, said: "He's not not on the team." Eller explained that the group is loosely organized, without official members. Stephanopoulos says Gergen "works on everything."

Gergen has repeatedly irritated his detractors at the White House. They criticized him for inviting *Washington Post* gossip columnist Lois Romano to his office for a chat. Gergen says Romano asked for the session. Besides, he says, talking to journalists is "what I'm supposed to do." He's also been faulted for defending his friend Ed Rollins after the GOP consultant declared he had suppressed the black vote in the New Jersey governor's race, then said he hadn't. Gergen invited Nixon colleague John Ehrlichman to lunch at the White House mess. This struck some Clintonites, especially the younger ones, as inappropriate. And in a radio interview after the State of the Union, Gergen said Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole "probably . . . made some points" in his response to the president by using a chart that

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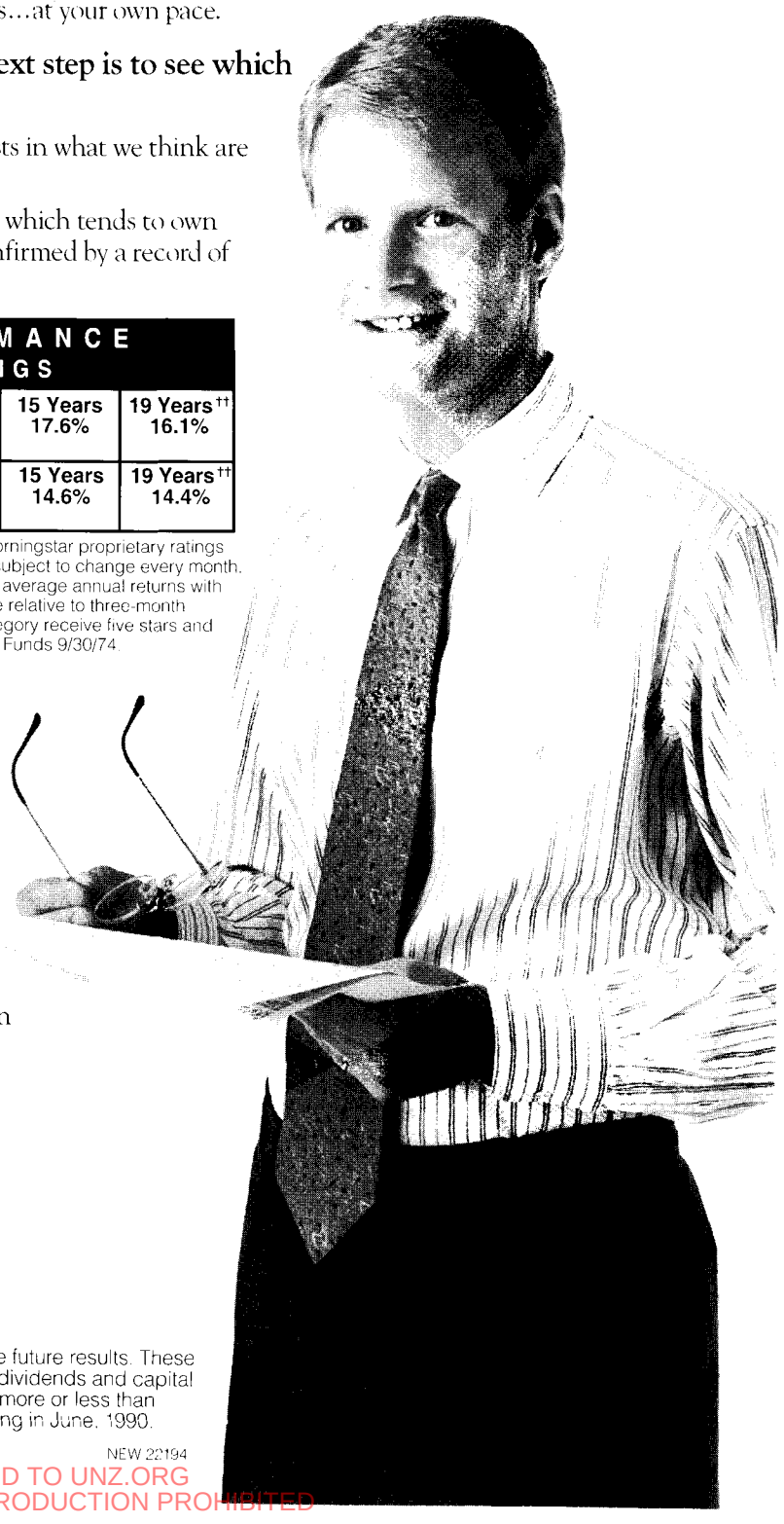

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depicted the complexities of the Clinton health plan. Gergen was right. The chart, though not Dole, was effective in attacking the president's proposal.

What's ironic about criticism of Gergen is that he helped Clinton recover from early presidential trouble. A Gergen leak at the Tokyo summit last June capped Clinton's first big success. American negotiators had worked out a framework agreement with the Japanese on the course and timetable for bilateral trade talks. That mini-breakthrough didn't seem like much until Gergen got wind of a shoving match between Japanese officials. One group accused the other of making too many concessions to the United States. When Gergen learned of this from another Clinton aide, he began leaking word of it. The squabble among Japanese officials came to represent, for the press anyway, Clinton's success in Tokyo.

What angers Gergen's critics most is his persistence in prodding Clinton to take moderate positions. When immigration flared as an issue in 1993, Gergen urged the president to toughen his stand against illegal immigrants. Clinton did. More recently, Gergen was crucial in getting Clinton out of potential trouble on the crime issue. Last year, the president had two chief talking points on crime: deployment of 100,000 more cops and gun control. But the Clinton budget provided funds for only 20,000 new police officers. The president himself was "frustrated," an aide said. He thought his crime program was inadequate and he wanted more ideas. The president knew the issue was heating up. Last October, he delivered a speech at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and got three standing ovations. Two were prompted by strong anti-crime rhetoric.

Gergen had plenty of allies on the crime issue. One was Bruce Reed, the deputy White House domestic adviser and a former leader of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. Another was Democrat Joe Biden of Delaware, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Biden lobbied Clinton to fund all the 100,000 new cops in the 1995 budget, a suggestion backed by Reed, Gergen and McLarty. Financing was found using money from cuts in the bureaucracy proposed in Vice President Al Gore's scheme for "reinventing government." This not only gave Clinton a tougher position on crime, it allowed him to deliver on a campaign pledge. Gergen also promoted life imprisonment of third-time perpetrators of violent crimes. Clinton agreed. In his State of the Union, he endorsed "three strikes and you're out." This completed a political hat trick, with the president backing the most popular anti-crime measures: more cops, tougher sentences, gun control.

But the sniping may take its toll. "They won't be satisfied until I'm gone," Gergen says of his detractors. He's been rumored to be in line for Washington bureau chief of ABC News. That rumor was bolstered when Gergen was the guest of ABC News Chief Roone Arledge at the Washington Press Club's dinner on January 26. But Gergen insists he's had no job talks with the network. The point, though, is that Gergen has options outside the White House. If he seizes one, the loss would be Clinton's. •

JERUSALEM POSTCARD

STRONGER CLOTH

By Gershom Gorenberg

The shrine stands on a side street—a triangular black rock, like a misshapen arrowhead, surrounded by pink geraniums, potted shrubs and a low fence. "In memory of the soldier Iris Azulai, whose blood was spilled here by a wicked murderer," reads a Plexiglas sign; following the name is a Hebrew abbreviation for "May God avenge her blood." Last time I checked, the daily bouquet before her stone was made up of white carnations.

Azulai was stabbed in the heart by a Palestinian worker from a nearby building site as she left her home, in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Baka, early one morning three years ago. Down the street, next to my 4-year-old son's day-care center, are stones for that morning's other victims—Eli Altaratz, a nursery owner in his 40s knifed while on his way to deliver a potted plant, and an off-duty cop named Charlie Chelouche, who died trying to catch the killer. The hunks of black rock bearing their names stand next to each other in another carefully tended, verdant rectangle. I walk past the memorials nearly every day. In recent weeks, as the excruciating negotiations between Israel and the PLO have ground on, I've thought more about them and other local landmarks. Less than a mile to the southeast, for instance, above my home in the adjacent neighborhood of Talpiot, just past the corner grocery, is the ridge that marked the edge of the DMZ between Israel and Jordan until the Six-Day War. I've lived in Baka and Talpiot most of the last sixteen years, and their geography provides the map of my anxieties, and of my hopes.

In 1977, when I first arrived in Israel as a student, I moved into a concrete housing block in Baka, one of many the government had shoved between the big stone houses built by wealthy Arabs during the British Mandate. The Arabs had fled during the 1948 War of Independence, and their houses had been divvied up among Jewish immigrants—a wide living room went to one family, some bedrooms to another, a porch was turned into a kitchen by filling graceful stone arches with cinder blocks. One pair of mansions, originally the property of the Deeb family, agents for Oldsmobile and Buick, who organized an Arab militia during the battle for Jerusalem, had been turned into a college for Jewish parochial teachers from abroad.

A few yards from where Azulai's memorial now stands, Haganah troops crossed the train tracks to take Baka and link up with the cut-off Jewish neighborhood of Tal-

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piot on May 15, 1948, only hours after Israel declared independence. At the Allenby Barracks, an abandoned British base next to Talpiot, the soldiers battled an Iraqi unit, routing the enemy with two shells from a homemade mortar. Bullet holes a handbreadth wide still pockmark the walls of the three-story stucco house that in 1948 stood at the Jewish neighborhood's edge. Later that month, on a hilltop to the south, Egyptian irregulars and Jordanian legionnaires conquered and lost Kibbutz Ramat Rachel three times in three days. In the final battle, Jewish defenders managed to hold on to the kibbutz dining hall, then retake the settlement. Today the kibbutzniks make their money running a swimming club and wedding hall for well-off Jerusalemites.

My obsession with the facts of the '48 war is born of dissonance, of the strain to imagine the city I now live in, where people work, shop and watch T.V., as a battlefield. One message for me, long before Sarajevo, has been that the fabric of normalcy is delicate. A wrong decision or a change of circumstances can shred it. War need not take place in distant jungles or deserts. It can happen here, between the traffic light and the grade school. Sometimes even good news can herald the collapse; the U.N. Partition Plan of 1947, intended to solve the Jewish-Arab conflict over Palestine, led to Israel's establishment *and* to the struggle for Jerusalem.

But as long as the conflict hasn't been resolved, normalcy can also be torn briefly, in a particular place. Like the corner in front of the bank on Hebron Road where a bomb blew up in the fall of 1977—as I remember, ripping apart an Arab man, perhaps a passerby, perhaps a fatally inept terrorist. A friend of mine who lived above the bank found a long splash of blood staining the asphalt when she came home that morning. Or further down Hebron Road, near my current apartment: three summers ago, after Palestinian terrorists killed two Jewish teenagers, toughs from the housing projects began stoning Arab cars there. A concrete block struck an East Jerusalem Arab named Izat Halhala, his car overturned and he died of his wounds. There are also the shrines in Baka, between the Arab houses that yuppies are now renovating. Iris Azulai had stepped out to go to the grocer when a man thrust a bayonet into her breast. She was 19.

This is the territory of my daily life, and it's from here that I watch the nightly diplomatic bulletins and the televised images of Shimon Peres and Yasir Arafat meeting to turn the accord into reality. Happy at the thought of peace, I still wonder: What if they have misguessed? After all, since the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles was signed in September, there has been no stop to violence in the territories. Most of the Palestinians who have shot or knifed Israelis were members of anti-Arafat groups such as Hamas, but one settler was killed by rogue members of Arafat's own Fatah organization. And Jewish terrorists apparently carried out the drive-by murder of three Palestinians near Hebron in December. That might be just the start. What if, after self-rule is in place, our army and the autonomous Palestinians can't stop the violence, and the chaos spreads across the unmarked line between the West Bank and Jerusalem?

Or looking further ahead: by the time the interim accord ends in five years, a Palestinian state is almost sure to be established in the West Bank. That may not bring the border back to the ridge just beyond my corner grocer; for one thing, 15,000 Jews now live in East Talpiot, a swath of stone apartment towers on hills past the old line. But even if the final agreement allows Israel to hold all of annexed East Jerusalem—which is hard to imagine—the border will be two miles from my home, within range of medium mortars. Arafat has agreed to peace with Israel, but what if he loses power to irredentists?

Still, the hopes are stronger than the fears. The fabric of our normalcy has been thin because it was woven, in large part, out of an illusion. It was the illusion of calm when the conflict between two peoples over the same land remained. It was the illusion that we could live together safely with the Palestinians, without borders, that we could hire them to tile our floors and plaster our walls, while they went home at night to cities and refugee camps under military occupation. Here and there, in brutal moments, acts of terror ripped the illusion.

Despite all the diplomatic tangles, we have a chance of weaving a stronger cloth. If the accord leads only to a cold peace, at least the people with knives and pipe bombs will be on the other side of an electronic border fence, which is far easier to defend than a thousand back streets. And if, as is very possible, compromise leads to reconciliation, we and the Palestinians will be able to live together with open borders. Baka's jagged memorial stones will be reminders not of present dangers, but of the fading past.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is the op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report.*

ON THE HILL

CHAFEE AT THE BIT

By Weston Kosova

Of all the people Bob Dole and his chart incensed last Tuesday night, no one should have been more peeved than John Chafee. Dole's acrid dismissal of the health care quandary as a figment of Clintonism seemed also to take aim at Chafee, whose Republican health reform package is nearly as ambitious as the president's. Dole's speech touched off a flurry of speculation: the next day, Hill staffers swapped rumors of the Chafee plan's imminent demise. Chafee was "on the wane," and "in eclipse." Dole, the chief co-

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sponsor of the Chafee bill, was said to have abandoned the Rhode Island senator's comprehensive reform package for the cluster of minimalist fixes touted by Texas Senator Phil Gramm and his conservative cadre.

Chafee, for one, wasn't buying the hype. On January 28, three days after Dole's apparent conversion, he was unconcerned with the threat of a new Republican gospel. "I'm not prepared to concede that Senator Dole has moved to the Gramm plan," he said, dismissing the subject with a hand chop to his desk. "If you read what Senator Dole says, if you set aside some of the labels and look at what he is supporting, it comes right back to our bill."

In the words of one Senate GOP staffer, Dole was just playing his role as minority leader. "He is stacking up his ammunition. The Chafee plan is one of those cannon balls; the Gramm plan is, too. I don't know which one he's going to shoot when he starts firing." Chafee put it slightly more diplomatically: "I think Senator Dole is very, very conscious of his responsibilities as a leader," he explained. "He's said many times he's trying to get all the Republicans on the same wavelength."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Chafee was right. Three days later Dole backed off the no-crisis rhetoric. "Let me make it clear that I believe our discussions over health care reform must move beyond terminology and theatrics," he told the American Hospital Association in Washington on January 31. "This debate should not be caught up in a fight over whether there is or is not a crisis." Dole then went on to trowel praise on each of the Republican plans, including Chafee's. (In an interview later the same day, Dole took a few more steps away from the apparent endorsement of Gramm, his rival for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination: "I didn't know it was the Gramm model," he said.)

Chafee can afford to be confident. He knows that Dole won't risk alienating him, not now. Like Dole, Chafee holds a seat on the Senate Finance Committee, the future staging ground for Senate health care debates. But more important, Chafee has emerged in recent weeks as the fulcrum for the delicate first round of compromises now taking place among competing health care plans from both parties and both houses of Congress.

When politicians talk about finding common ground on health care, Chafee's name invariably comes up. "Chafee is our guy," says one White House health care adviser. "He's the one man who can pull this thing together." Representative Jim Cooper, author of the leading Democratic alternative to the Clinton plan, is equally effusive: "He is a hero in this process."

Why Chafee? In part because he has an asset that GOP stalwarts like Dole and Gramm don't: Democratic appeal. Chafee's willingness to stray from the Republican line even on highly visible issues gives him cachet with Democrats. Last year, for example, Chafee, who served a stint as Navy secretary under Richard Nixon, supported Clinton's efforts to lift the military gay ban. He also voted for Democratic favorites such as the "motor-voter" bill and the Family and Medical Leave Act. "Chafee is seen as very credible and honest; they trust him," says one Republican Senate staffer (not one of Chafee's).

In his own party, Chafee won early health care credentials, scoring points for his crusade to help reluctant fellow Republican senators get a grip on the issues. The Chafee plan is the product of the Republican Health Care Task Force, a working group he formed with Dole in July 1990; its goal was to create a viable Republican health reform package. (Chafee had worked on health care before. As governor of Rhode Island in the mid-'60s, he had enacted Blue Cross coverage for the elderly two years before Medicare.) Every Thursday morning for more than two years, Chafee hosted task force meetings for Republican senators and staffers in his Capitol hideaway, where they deciphered opaque health care texts while feasting on cold cereal and bananas. Twenty or so senators showed up regularly for the 8:30 a.m. gatherings (Dole was a frequent attendee). As a result, Chafee says, "Republican senators are better-educated on health care than any other group in the Congress."

The plan that eventually emerged from the task force last November is a hodgepodge of liberal, moderate and conservative elements. Depending on which page you're

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reading, it's possible to mistake it for Clinton, Cooper, even Gramm. Like the Clinton plan, Chafee's requires universal coverage, but he achieves it by 2005 with an individual mandate, instead of by 1998 with an employer mandate. Chafee's plan also includes Clinton-style health care purchasing alliances, though these, too, are stripped down to avoid what Chafee calls the Clinton plan's "excessive regulation." Clinton's alliances are required for all but the largest businesses, which can form their own cooperatives. Chafee's are voluntary for individuals and businesses with fewer than 100 employees. Chafee's plan also weighs in with several conservative Republican standards. It rejects Clinton's price caps on insurance premiums, for example, leaving it to the market to keep costs down. And it places caps on the deductibility of premiums, while the Clinton plan allows for more generous tax breaks on expensive packages.

This eclectic mix gives the plan a rough-edgedness; rather than a coherent whole, it more resembles a patchwork quilt assembled from the stray bits of other plans. Which is precisely the basis of its appeal. The Chafee plan isn't so much a health care bill as it is a health care DMZ. Architects of rival packages on both sides of the aisle may snipe at each others' texts, but nearly all of them can find one or two friendly passages in Chafee's pages.

Take the White House. While Ira Magaziner and Hillary Rodham Clinton have repeatedly disparaged fellow Democrat Jim Cooper's plan, they have praised Chafee lavishly for his endorsement of universal coverage. Chafee, Magaziner and Rodham Clinton "have met more than a dozen times," says a White House aide. The administration has been blowing kisses to Chafee for a while. Last year, before either the Clinton or Chafee plans had been introduced, Rodham Clinton proposed that they work on a bill together. Chafee resisted. "I had to make sure my troops were with me," he says. "I'm a representative of the task force."

Meanwhile, Chafee has also been in close touch with Cooper. Over the congressional recess, staffers from Chafee's and Cooper's offices met to hammer out a compromise between their two bills. And though Cooper calls Chafee's voluntary health alliances "problematic" ("If voluntary worked we probably wouldn't have to pass a bill," he says) and faults the senator's 2005 completion date as too far away, he says "you could almost call [the Chafee plan] a cousin to ours. We have a lot in common."

But not everyone is knocking on Chafee's door. He pretty much dismisses the likelihood of any sort of compromise with Gramm, whose Comprehensive Family Health Access and Savings Act eliminates purchasing alliances, lets people pay for coverage through "health care savings accounts" and allows insurance companies to raise premiums for people with certain illnesses. "I don't see us trimming our sails to a great extent in order to pick up Phil Gramm," Chafee says. "He feels strongly in the position he's taken; I'm always open to some sort of compromise, but it looks pretty difficult here." That suits Gramm just fine. The Texan says he attended a few breakfast meetings of Chafee's task force. But not many: "I stopped when I saw the direction it was going in." •

The right abandons "workfare."

BASTARDS

By Mickey Kaus

In the summer of 1993, the resident welfare expert at the conservative Heritage Foundation, a man named Robert Rector, published a scholarly article in the *Journal of Labor Research* in which he concluded that "the indispensable core to serious welfare reform must be work requirements." Toward the end of 1993, however, Rector returned to print, this time with a tract denouncing President Clinton's proposal for, yes, work requirements. "Clinton evades the core problem of the welfare state and the root of many of America's social problems," Rector charged. What was this new "root"? Not welfare dependency, but "illegitimacy." "Insisting that welfare mothers work at community service jobs will do little to reduce welfare costs or to improve society," he declared, "as long as the illegitimate birthrate remains at 30 percent and rising."

Once upon a time, it was easy to follow the welfare debate. Conservatives damned the dole and wanted welfare recipients to work for a living. Ronald Reagan ran for president boasting of the "workfare" plan he had instituted as governor of California. Liberals tended to oppose work requirements; they mainly wanted to get more money to the poor. Neoliberals fretted that by favoring welfare over work Democrats were flouting the "values" of the voters. But then the voters elected a Democrat who promises that after two years on welfare "anyone who can work, must, in the private sector where possible, in community service if necessary."

Suddenly, conservative Republicans seem to be discovering that work isn't so important after all. "I don't care how many women go to work," says Charles Murray, whose op-ed article in *The Wall Street Journal* last October set off the anti-illegitimacy boom. "Illegitimacy," Murray wrote, "is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else." Other right-wing intellectuals—Rector, James Q. Wilson, William Bennett and William Kristol—have since seconded Murray's argument. The "point of welfare reform," said Bennett and Peter Wehner in a recent *USA Today* op-ed, is "not to ensure tougher work provisions."

It's not hard to see a rejectionist front developing, in which conservatives righteously withdraw their support for Clinton's welfare reform—and even for Republican workfare plans—on the grounds that these efforts somehow ignore the "core" concern of illegitimacy. The

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

All Smiles

It seems we have a new standard for judging the success of a school. We no longer ask, "How much has student achievement improved?" We ask, "Is everybody happy?"

The Milwaukee parental choice program has been hailed as a big success by voucher advocates all over the country. Now in its fourth year, it uses money provided by the state to send a small number of poor children to private schools. Advocates say it proves that vouchers will fix our failing education system. But what do they mean by success? We now have a third independent evaluation. It shows what the first two evaluations also showed: Parents of Milwaukee voucher students are happy, but kids who attend these voucher schools do no better than their counterparts in the public schools.

According to the evaluation, choice parents are much more satisfied with the private school than with the public school their children previously attended on every count: textbooks, opportunities for parent involvement, teacher and principal performance, program of instruction, amount the child learned and discipline in the school. And 73 percent of the parents give the choice school an A or B, compared with only 48 percent for their child's former public school.

However, there is no corresponding jump in student achievement. There are small year-to-year fluctuations in the reading and math scores for choice students and a comparable group in the public schools. But here is how evaluator John Witte describes student achievement in 1993: "Choice reading scores declined more than [public school] reading scores. On math, choice students improved for the first time while [public school] students did not. When we controlled for other relevant variables, however, the effect of being in a choice school was insignificant." There is nothing in the achievement of these Milwaukee choice students that warrants the enthusiastic reviews choice advocates give the program; the private schools are not outperforming public schools.

Milwaukee is not the only place that cares more about happiness than achievement when it comes to judging school improvement programs. A couple of years ago, when Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), a private, for-profit firm, landed a contract to manage nine Baltimore schools, then-Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander gave the company an award for successful educational innovation—before it had even set foot inside the schools. Now, we hear that EAI, or perhaps some other private management firm, will come to Washington, D.C. The D.C. schools could certainly use help. Their student achievement is consistently at or close to the bottom according to every measure. But aside from Secretary Alexander's award, what qualifications does EAI have to help the D.C. schools? Does it have any educational expertise? No. Is its educational program exemplary? The program has never been evaluated; it's never been written up in any scholarly journal; in fact, it's secret.

Our competitor nations don't judge the success of their schools by happy faces, and neither should we.

EAI makes big claims about its success but offers no figures on how well the students in EAI schools are doing. (An independent evaluation would answer this question. But before any such evaluation is done in Baltimore, both EAI and the school district—the ones who have most to lose from an unfavorable evaluation—have to approve the evaluator.) What EAI supporters do talk about is how the company has had Baltimore school buildings painted, trash hauled away from the schoolyards and some computers brought in. And they talk about how pleased and happy parents, students and some teachers are. No one doubts that run-down schools are demoralizing or wonders that people involved with the schools are happy about these changes. But do smiles and warm feelings make the EAI program an *educational* success? Does anybody think they can take the place of giving kids an education that will qualify them for college and decent jobs?

Happiness is not our big educational problem. It's setting demanding and worthwhile standards for student achievement and pushing and helping students to meet them. It's easy to confuse feeling good with doing well. That's the mistake people make when they ask schools to teach their kids self-esteem instead of asking schools to help their kids achieve, which will truly make the kids feel good about themselves. But would we be satisfied with a good paint job if we brought a car in to have its motor replaced?

Our competitor nations don't judge the success of their schools by happy faces, and neither should we.

The push to adopt voucher plans or hire private management companies is going on in a number of places where student achievement is very poor. But before the parents and taxpayers in Jersey City or Washington, D.C., or elsewhere get pushed or seduced into accepting a voucher plan or a private management company, they should ask for some hard evidence that it will improve student achievement. They'll find the evidence doesn't exist.

The third Milwaukee report on parental choice is available for $5 from Publications Sales, Dept. of Public Instruction., Drawer 179, Milwaukee, WI 53293-0179.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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obvious analogue is the "there-is-no-health-care-crisis" line that Kristol sold, at least temporarily, to Senator Bob Dole. The difference is that even Kristol admits "there is a welfare crisis." And while Republicans have never favored universal health insurance, they have been loudly advocating work requirements as the solution to the welfare mess for decades. Indeed, two Republican governors, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin and William Weld of Massachusetts, recently unveiled dramatic new workfare initiatives. If Republicans now abandon such efforts, they will have executed an ideological about-face of near-Leninist proportions.

What's so terrible about making welfare mothers work, exactly? The new anti-workfare argument is difficult to grasp, in part, because the illegitimacy-obsessives and the work-obsessives agree on so much. Both sides would address the large social problem of the underclass, of communities characterized by nonwork (40-60 percent of the population on welfare) and fatherless families (60-80 percent of children born out of wedlock). Both sides implicate welfare in this disaster, in that welfare enables young women to give birth to babies outside of marriage and to avoid having to go to work. Both sides also worry about the rise of illegitimacy in mainstream, middle-class society. (Clinton sounded this alarm, most recently, in his State of the Union address.)

What traditional "work" advocates say—and I would put not only Clinton, Thompson and Weld, but also Reagan in this grouping—is something like the following: the primary problem with the "underclass" is that it has been cut off from the opportunities and strictures of the working world. The biggest single step in solving the problem would be if we could get all the mothers on welfare into the labor force. Three things would follow from that. First, fewer people would be poor. Second, children would be brought up better. They would have at least one worker at home to use as a role model, and the rhythms and requirements of work would discipline home life. Third, and not coincidentally, *illegitimacy and single parenthood would decline.* Young girls would know that if they had an out-of-wedlock child, welfare wasn't going to support them indefinitely. They'd have to juggle single parenting with work. Once they realized this, they would begin to make better choices, such as marrying before having children.

In theory, the anti-illegitimacy school has a stark disagreement with this work-centered analysis. "The problem is not that a single mother isn't working, it's that that single mother is a single mother," says Kristol. Neither work, in and of itself, nor the indirect effects of work on income and family life are deemed sufficient to overcome the impact of having only one parent in the home, even a working parent. "Getting women to work is not my definition of success," says Murray.

"Reducing illegitimacy" is Murray's definition of success. Why not "reducing single parenthood," to account for the plight of children in homes broken by divorce? Because, Murray has written, "women who have babies out of wedlock tend to make worse mothers than women who have babies within wedlock" and later get divorced. A mother in the latter group postponed pregnancy until marriage and is thus "likely to be a more responsible and more intelligent person than the young woman" who does not have a "sense of the solemnity of motherhood."

Even as a matter of social science, the illegitimacy-first analysis is open to dispute. Murray presents data showing (no surprise) it's best to grow up as a legitimate child in a working home. It's worse for illegitimate children in non-welfare homes, even worse for illegitimate children whose mothers have received some welfare, worse still for illegitimate children whose mothers are chronic welfare recipients. So it's bad to grow up illegitimate, and it's bad to grow up on welfare. The data don't prove that illegitimacy "drives" the problem any more than they prove that welfare dependency (i.e., nonwork) "drives" the problem. Which would we rather have: A world of single mothers who all work? Or a world of intact families on the dole? Interesting question. The conservatives in the illegitimacy-is-everything camp certainly don't have many kind words for the European social democracies that allow intact families to "make welfare a way of life."

Similarly debatable is Murray's splashiest selling point, the idea that, thanks to out-of-wedlock births, we face "the emergence of a white underclass." True, about 22 percent of white births are illegitimate. That can't be a good thing. But it takes a geographic concentration of pathology to create an underclass, something that is far more easily accomplished when there is a racial, ethnic or cultural difference to facilitate segregation. The vast majority of white single mothers are spread out among the mainstream population; it's hard to herd them into ghettos. Nor does it appear to be true, as Murray asserts, that "white illegitimacy is overwhelmingly a lower-class phenomenon," unless you count as "lower-class" all mothers who graduate from high school but don't attend college. (About one-third of white, never-married mothers appear to be high school dropouts, a proportion that is shrinking.) For all the talk of the "coming white underclass," even Murray admits that "the problem is not scattered evenly throughout society, but concentrated among blacks in the inner city."

So what about the mainly black underclass? It is the underclass culture, after all—including, as noted, the culture of single parenthood—that the various work-oriented welfare plans, including Clinton's, are designed to address. Even Murray concedes that "you will get effects on illegitimacy if the work aspect is strict enough." He just denies that it will ever be very strict. ("You're never going to make it fly in the big cities.") Murray's now famous alternative is simply to cut off welfare benefits to single mothers.

On the key issue of the underclass, then, we wind up with a practical debate over which welfare plan would reduce illegitimacy more efficiently, with fewer ill effects. Neither the "make-'em-work" nor the "cut-'em-off" plans would ban illegitimacy directly. Both rely on deterrence. The work approach draws on a sturdy,

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uncontroversial value, but it's expensive—you have to provide jobs and day-care—and it could degenerate into a flaccid make-work program. The "cutoff" approach builds on a controversial value ("single motherhood is wrong"), and it buys its extra deterrence at the cost of potential inhumanity. Murray even winds up cutting off the "more responsible" divorcees. Why not try to make the work approach work? The Murray position amounts to Why-Bother Conservatism, saying, in effect, "The liberals are going to screw up this good idea so badly, we might as well not try."

What happens outside the underclass—among, say, the roughly 40 percent of white women with illegitimate babies who never go on welfare, and won't be affected by a cutoff? Here the anti-illegitimacy policy arsenal is pretty limited. Rector and Murray suggest tax breaks for married couples. Rector recommends "abstinence education"; Murray, a national no-smoking-style campaign to stigmatize illegitimacy. These are the sorts of initiatives conservatives laugh at when liberals suggest them. Is the problem of *working* single mothers really so threatening that it requires a massive mobilization of stigma? There are other, bigger crises. Maybe even health care.

There is one set of problems the illegitimacy approach seems to solve neatly: the political problems of Republicans confronted with a Democratic president who wants to put welfare mothers to work. It gives Republicans a seemingly profound reason for failing to support work-oriented reform legislation for which Clinton would take credit. It relieves them of the need to confront the reality that the workfare reforms they've been advocating require new spending and new bureaucracy. It gives them something to say ("Pull the plug," urges Bennett) that even New Democrats are unlikely to parrot. By raising the specter of a "white underclass," it relieves them of the charge of racism. And it defuses the contradiction between welfare work requirements and the traditionalist right-wing view that mothers should stay at home.

Last November 160 House Republicans, attempting to put Clinton on the spot, introduced their own version of a two-years-and-work welfare reform. There was speculation that a coalition of Republicans and moderate Democrats could pass Clinton's welfare bill in fairly short order. Even then, some conservatives were restive. ("Why are we so anxious to commit political suicide?" asked Representative Jan Meyers.) But now Rector and Murray have been visiting Capitol Hill, undermining support for work requirements and promoting Murray's cold-turkey solution. There is little doubt that the House Republican bill wouldn't get anything like 160 GOP votes today. The bill does cut off all benefits to parents who are minors, unless a state votes to retain those benefits. But that provision is now deemed insufficiently draconian, and there is talk of a second, more sweeping, cutoff bill. In a few more months, Republican support for Clinton-style work requirements may have largely vanished. If the president wants his welfare reform, he'd better act fast. •

My teenage obsession.

HAROLDING

By Douglas Coupland

In Britain there is a subgroup of citizens called train-spotters who spend their afternoons sitting on railway embankments clocking the passage of local trains. In North America there is a similar subgroup, comprised almost entirely of teens, obsessed with hanging about cemeteries, continually witnessing the passage of life into death. They are called "Harolds" (etymology: the 1970s cult film classic *Harold and Maude*), and I was once very much one. The cemetery I frequented was the Capilano View Cemetery, the municipal burial ground of West Vancouver, located in the British Properties, a hillside Pacific Palisades/Glendale-ish suburb that was spawned ex nihilo circa 1950. (Its growth continued well into the 1970s.)

From the ages of 18 to 21, I Harolded away almost weekly at the Capilano View Cemetery, sitting on its benches, strolling among its neatly mowed stones, seeing who had died, when and at what age. Implicit in the act of being a Harold is a hubristic, self-conscious notion of one's own immortality. Harold laughs in the face of death (har, har, har!) and, most importantly, he derives a specific hit of adolescent pleasure from callowly knowing death exists, yet not fearing it.

Capilano View Cemetery is the only part of the British Properties to have a history of any credible duration. Its first burial was in February of 1926. The cemetery's topiaried ilexes, yews, cedars, spruces and cherries are all roughly fiftysomething, and thus supply the suburb's young Harolds (I was not alone) with visible, capital "H" History simply not available at the Park Royal Shopping Centre or amid the post-and-beam Homes of Tomorrow, flanked by split-leaf Japanese maples, that line the Properties' steep, twisting streets.

Capilano View's ten spartan acres offer an uncompromising minimalism worthy of Mies Van der Rohe: no protrusive tombstones are allowed (all stones are flush with the soil and ideal for Friday night frisbee throws); all "floral offerings" must fit into cups recessed into the soil, so that the container does not peek above the earth's surface. Plastic flowers are allowed only between November 1 and April 1. The cemetery is flanked, to the north and east, by a great West Coast rain forest. There are rhododendrons; there are monkey puzzles.

Harold Lit.: Part of growing up in West Vancouver was to feel as if you were growing up in the middle of nowhere—a zero-history, zero-ideology, bond-issuing construct teetering on the edge of the continent. I used

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to read stories about tea planters and rubber plantation owners who died in hot climates and were buried the same day, for fear of rot, in lands far from home. Oh, how I identified with those tea planters! "Who *are* we if we have no landscape to call our own?" I would muse, surrounded by the grave markers. To be buried on the edge of nowhere is to question one's existence.

The Harolding habit continued into adulthood. I often visit cemeteries when I am in a new city, for they are havens of respite amid urban chaos. Toronto's Forest Hill is as quiet as the womb; Tokyo's Akasaka cemetery, usually empty save for a few special visiting days, has the sloppy, stacks-of-dishes feel of a bachelor's apartment. Cemetery architecture can also tell us much about the way a culture relates to its ancestry. Mexico's dazzling, almost optically painful marzipan crypt confections convey a "they are still alive" rapport with the departed; Ireland's mournful, lichen-encrusted Celtic crosses snaggletoothed over tufts of unscythed bracken speak of loneliness and of the realization that we all live with one foot in the grave. And West Vancouver's highly municipally ordinated, gridded and nearly invisible grave markers treat dying as a low-fuss return to nature. One's soul is simply ATMed into the forest next door.

I stopped being a Harold because of one particular incident. In the summer of 1983 I was playing a toy xylophone on a cement bench at the extreme east edge of the cemetery. I was trying to duplicate the opening notes of Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's 1981 hit "Joan of Arc" (my brief flirtation with Catholicism). A few days later, reading a copy of the local biweekly *North Shore News* at a Midas muffler shop, I learned that there had been a grave robbery at the cemetery not a day after I had been playing the xylophone—and not far from my prized Harold's bench. A decayed head, or other body parts, had been exhumed and stolen, thieves unknown.

Well, that was *that*—I immediately ceased Harolding the Capilano View. Mortality (in the form of the most depressing ilk of trailer park evil) had crept in from the forest and invaded my pristine site. I remember being depressed and terrified at somehow being implicated in this random and seamy debauch. And to clinch my exodus, the newspapers reported that an additional five acres of forest, adjoining the cemetery's lovely north side, was to be chainsawed and cleared for additional grave sites. Expansion in the New World is invariably at the expense of nature—never at the expense of previously existing structures. And to someone completely *of* the New World, the ravaging can be too painful to watch. *Ciao, Harold.*

Of course, I *did* find myself back in Capilano View. Recently. By one's early 30s, loss in many of its forms invariably makes its presence known. I felt an urgent need to visit Harold's old stomping grounds.

I was surprised by what I saw. Yes, the spare green fields, flat as billiard tables, were unchanged. But the five-acre clearcut to the north had been left to go to seed. I had been expecting a putting-green carpet peppered with grave markers; instead the ex-forest sprouted a dense, furry hippie's beard of several thousand alders, their ganglions of leafless branches,poking upward. The fact that the forest had not been destroyed—merely repurposed as an alder glade—might, at first, seem like a reprieve, but it was not. By B.C. standards the alder is a weed tree, a mere precursor to degradation, destruction on hiatus. Alders mean that the bulldozers have yet to truly arrive, that the Circle-K mini-mart is still being designed. A field of Kentucky bluegrass would have at least indicated some form of completion, that the worst was over. Alders, on the other hand, show nature on the rack.

But this is tree-hugger talk, a B.C. thing. The fact is, I felt oh-so-much older standing next to this brain-dead glade, this copse of erased memory. Its millions of thick, chewy branches, three times my height, all bunched ridiculously close together, comprised a challenge impossible to refuse. And so, forgetting propriety, and soaking my sweater and pants and shoes, I stepped into this wet monoculture. I stepped into its mud and leather-strap branches, which slapped my face. I trudged deeper and deeper, as though into a field of tall, tall corn, and I went looking for Harold.

DOUGLAS COUPLAND is author of the forthcoming *Life After God* (Pocket Books).

Adolf Hitler was just the beginning.

ART TO DIE FOR

By Alex Heard

Henry's art, like Henry himself, is somewhat folksy and simple, but is pleasant nonetheless.—Collector Nick Bougas on the pen and inks of serial killer Henry Lee Lucas, in "Killer Art: A Brief Sketch"

"You've seen some things before," says my host with a knowing glance.

I'm in the Chicago apartment of Mark Hejnar, a friendly film editor who is complimenting me for making it through his new underground video without fainting or barfing. Appropriately titled "Affliction," it features stomach-flipping extremes of human misbehavior, including a terrifying turn by a New York man known only as "Frank." A self-proclaimed psychopath, Frank became a fringe celebrity a few years back by declaring—in small-circulation "'zines" he wrote and distributed—that he was a mass-murderer-to-be, gearing up for a bloody spree that would happen sometime between 1993 and 1995. On the tape (which he

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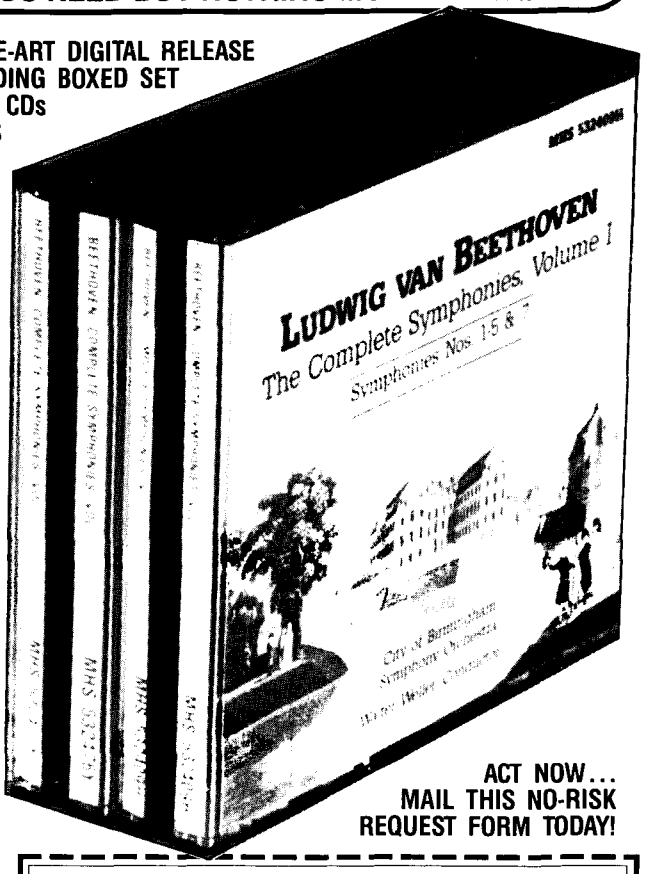

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apparently shot, alone, in his apartment) Frank seems plenty serious. Wearing a black ski mask and mirror shades, he splutters in angry Brooklynese as he points to a bed covered with guns, knives and dynamite. "I gotta do what the gun tells me to do!" he shouts, waving a pistol. Late in 1991 Frank disappeared—in his printed rants he says the FBI was hounding him—and his vanishing act left some fans pining. In a colloquy of Frank buffs published in *Obscure*, a 'zine that tracks other 'zines, Scott Williams, editor of *Caffeine Addiction*, moaned, "I hope he's just in hiding. I hope I hear about him on the news in the next six months—hear that he's become the most infamous mass murderer in the history of the world."

Frank's fans stand out against the larger backdrop of America's recent, bizarre fascination with the Menendez brothers. Sure, some Frank buffs are merely engaging in very dark irony and one-upmanship that involves possessing more startling material than the next guy. But some, clearly, have staked out philosophical turf that even devoted Lyle and Erik freaks aren't likely to approach: the notion that killers aren't just kitschy or neat, but heroic—avenging angels of death who perform the thankless work of cutting down on humanity's "surplus." Notes *Obscure* Editor Jim Romenesko: "To the people in this underground, the Menendezes are just another boring society murder story. They prefer killers with a permanent five-day growth of beard." How widespread is this stuff, and does it say anything enlightening about the American zeitgeist at the end of this starkly murderous century? Is it grounds for worry? Or just another beeper call to Geraldo's production team?

Geraldo is probably more like it. The good news for you folks who still believe murder is bad: the audience for this material isn't very big—a few thousand rattled souls, max, connected by a sputtering network of 'zines, mail and computer bulletin boards—and it consists mainly of passive, thrill-seeking consumers. The market offers two basic products: scary "art" by murderers, and even scarier prose by and about them, with the observational words mostly coming from fringe-dwelling hipsters whose chief aim, not surprisingly, is shock value.

The art has been around awhile, and it occasionally blips on the mainstream's radar screen. Last fall the state of Illinois filed suit against convicted serial killer John Wayne Gacy, alleging that the torturer and murderer of thirty-three young men and boys is "reasonably able to pay" for his jail costs because he's been making money through sales of his primitive renderings of clowns and Disney characters (mainly from mail-order sales managed by outside companies, but he's also had agents and gallery showings). Nick Bougas, a California crime buff and autograph hound who helped start the art collecting fad, says his interest in killer art dates back to the '70s, when he began expanding his stash of old-timey celebrity autographs (John Barrymore, Cecil B. DeMille) by writing people such as Sirhan Sirhan (who didn't reply) and Charles Manson (who did). Over time Bougas received "reams of letters and art" from Manson. Bougas's collection now contains works by, among others, Henry Lee Lucas, Ottis Toole (Lucas's sidekick) and Kenneth Bianchi (one of the two Hillside Stranglers, who produces what Bougas calls "thought-provoking collages of thematic imagery"). Gacy is king, though, his work having been the object of some murderous price gouges. Last year *The Miami Herald* reported on a local shop that was selling an original Gacy—a tiny canvas featuring Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs—for $2,000.

One motive is straightforward speculation, the idea being that if a murderer is executed, his stock will rise. But Bougas says that a few years back he started noticing that "pathetic little punk magazines" were appropriating this material. He's played along (his "Killer Art" review appeared in a 'zine called *Evil*), but he's irked about it, too, because he thinks the murder-is-neat "pose" has become "the ultimate trendy little fuck you sort of thing to do." One typical specimen, *Boiled Angel*, is at the heart of a court case pending in Florida, where an alienated young man named Mike Diana is charged with violating state obscenity laws. His 'zine featured cartoons of Jeffrey Dahmer eating flesh, Christ on a cross of penises and reprinted rantings from Ottis Toole, who brags that he slathered secret formula "bar-b-que sauce" on the children he cannibalized. In a recent killer art "happening," Guns 'N' Roses released a 1993 album with a song ("Look at Your Game, Girl") written by Manson.

Mayhem prose plays prominently in several 'zines—*Evil, Bukowski and Serial Killers* and *Murder Can Be Fun*—and creepy collections such as *Killer Fiction*, which is made up of "how I did it" short stories by convicted murderer G.J. Schaefer. But the hottest 'zine of the moment is *Answer Me!*, a thick, well-edited and (hard to believe, but true) sometimes hilarious piece of undistilled loathing produced by Jim and Debbie Goad, a pseudonymous pair based in Hollywood. Jim and Debbie are embittered by what they say were rough childhoods at the hands of abusive parents, and their screed is clear: they want *you* dead. *Answer Me!* features exhaustively researched roundups of the Goads' top 100 suicides and serial killers. While there's obvious irony in the mix, the Goads claim to mean it when they salaam people like Lucas and Richard Speck. "Oblivious to fanciful moralistic constructs," Jim writes, "[these killers] have the guts to take matters into their own hands. Are they disturbed? Perhaps, but that's a word we consider synonymous with 'visionary.' Some would say we've stepped over the line and are glorifying them. Of *course* we are." Jim's platform is genocide. "I'm not puking out hate because I want to change things. I'm not trying to get you to think like me.... Get the point? I HATE you! You're unworthy of redemption."

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Got it. But what is the point? That's the hard part—ask around and you mostly get shrugs and mumbles. "Some people are definitely into this 'death is cool' thing," observes Brian King, publisher of *Amok*, a catalog of fringe books, "but it's mostly on a Beavis and Butt-head level." The most carefully reasoned manifesto is found in Adam Parfrey's *Apocalypse Culture*, a 1990 compendium of outré outcroppings and philosophical rants. Parfrey says people like the Goads and Diana are carrying the banner of "aesthetic terrorism" by producing work that, unlike today's fully "co-opted" avant-garde art, "unleash[es] the reactionary impulse of police and bourgeois artist/critic alike.... Art that evokes this wrath, fear and condemnation rejoices in its pagan spirit of schadenfreude."

In reality, however, the players can't shoulder this heavy interpretive load. The Goads unleash reactions, all right, but they have trouble defining what it all might mean. "We shy away from saying we're trying to communicate anything," says Jim. The purpose of *Answer Me!*, he says, is "revenge," but of a narcissistic sort: against a lifetime's worth of "adults and magazine editors who said that I couldn't write these things." In his violent but childish doodlings, Mike Diana comes off as a pointless young brat who wouldn't be infamous if he hadn't had access to cheap photocopying. (He was busted after a page of *Boiled Angel* was found stuck in a copying machine at a school where he had once worked as a janitor.) As for Axl Rose, he just doesn't seem to get it. The proper aesthetic terrorism response to his troubles would have been a demonic yowl. Instead he offered socially acceptable bribes to buy peace: among other deals, he offered to donate the record's proceeds to the surviving son of a Manson victim.

Which is why Frank is interesting: his agenda is every bit as clear as the Goads', but unlike them, he claims to be serious about action, and he makes thick-hided observers shiver in their boots. ("In no uncertain terms," says Bougas, "I think Frank was very, very, very serious.") Real or phony, his existence forces a choice. If you believe in him as fact or symbol, you have to decide if you want him to act. Answer "yes," and you become not just a murder buff, but a murderer-at-heart—something the Goads, Diana and Williams all seem willing to do. Romenesko and Hejnar aren't, but their voyeuristic peeking and trafficking make them less than total innocents. As for Bougas ... well, he's unique. On the plus side he scorns people who think mass murder is cute; on the down side, it's because he's a confirmed Satanist who thinks mass murderers can, at best, only make small dents in a much larger problem. "I personally don't think shooting a bunch of people in a McDonald's adds up to much," he sniffs. "I'd like to see the earth really cleared of its bulk." What for? "So it could be fit for someone like Mario Lanza to sing here again."

ALEX HEARD, an editor at *Outside* magazine, is writing a book about apocalyptic subcultures in America.

When do we die? A case study.

SUNNY SIDE UP

By Jim Holt

In the course of a dinner party the other night, the conversation somehow reached the intersection of necrophilia and Hollywood. Seizing the chance, I observed that *Sunset Boulevard* was the only film in history narrated by a corpse. At this several other guests sharply demurred: What about *Reversal of Fortune*? Wasn't that narrated by the corpse of Sunny von Bulow? Well, I replied, as a matter of fact, no. While Sunny did supply the voice-over in that dramatized retelling of *l'affaire von Bulow*, she was not actually dead. She was merely in an irreversible coma. There is, after all, a difference. I mean, isn't there?

JIM HOLT is a New York writer.

In 1982, you will recall, Sunny von Bulow's Danish-born socialite husband, Claus, was convicted of attempting to murder her with an insulin-loaded hypodermic needle, and was sentenced to a long prison term. Two years later the verdict was overturned, and in a retrial Mr. von Bulow was acquitted. There had been no insulin injection, his lawyers contended; rather, Sunny's coma was induced by barbiturates and alcohol, complicated by hypothermia as she lay unattended on a cold bathroom floor at Clarendon Court, the couple's great stone pile in Newport.

At the time the trials of Claus von Bulow divided the international beau monde as deeply as the Dreyfus trials divided the Third Republic. Today they are a faint

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memory. Few realize that more than thirteen years after she was precipitated into a coma, Mrs. von Bulow survives in her deeply oblivious state. This beautiful and storied heiress is living out her days in a slummy quarter of northern Manhattan, at Columbia-Presbyterian hospital. Though her room is not large, it offers a fabulous view of the Hudson river and the New Jersey Palisades. She is dressed daily by around-the-clock attendants who also see to her hair, makeup and nails. A small stereo, I am told, fills the room with her favorite music.

All this, one might protest, for a breathing cadaver. At no time in the last thirteen years has Sunny evinced any sign of self-awareness. She cannot respond to stimuli—sights, sounds, touch. She is artificially nourished via a food tube. Neurological experts who have examined the damage to her brain declare that her loss of consciousness is irreversible. And yet: she *is* capable of breathing on her own, with no need of a respirator. She shows sleep-wake sequences. Now and then her lips curl into a smile. Her eyes open periodically, and have been said to tear when her two children by her first marriage, Ala and Alexander Auersperg, visit.

Improbably enough, Ala and Alex's father, Prince Alfie von Auersperg, also went into a coma, shortly after Sunny did, as a result of a car accident in Austria. He remained comatose for almost a decade until his recent death. The children were understandably perplexed by the shared condition of their parents, in whose memory they later established the Sunny von Bulow Coma and Brain Trauma Foundation in New York. "They're neither typically alive nor dead," Ala told *Vogue* in 1988. "What are they thinking? Are they thinking anything? Where is their 'I'? Where is their soul?"

Across this nation as many as 10,000 people are at any given moment in the same state as Sunny, according to Laurence J. Schneiderman, director of the program in medical ethics at the University of California–San Diego. They are being maintained in a coma (from the Greek word for "deep sleep"), or, as doctors now put it, in a "persistent vegetative state." The causes that brought about their PVS are various: boxing injuries, dental anesthesia, strokes, car accidents, police chokeholds, heart attacks and on and on. The longest comatose survivor ever, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, was Elaine Esposito: she lapsed into the state after surgery in 1941 and remained that way for thirty-seven years, until her death in 1978. The most famous—at least until Sunny—was Karen Quinlan, the New Jersey "sleeping beauty" who, in the mid-'70s, became the object of a protracted and much publicized legal battle when her parents tried to have her respirator turned off.

What all coma victims have in common is a severely damaged cerebral cortex. This is the "upper brain," responsible for cognition, perception, language and purposeful movement. If there is a cut-off of oxygen to the brain, it will lay waste to the cerebral hemispheres well before it damages the "lower brain," or brain stem, which controls respiration, blood pressure and the sleep-wake cycle, as well as certain involuntary reflexes. The brain stem remains largely intact in comatose patients. Thus they will occasionally yawn, chew, swallow, sigh, grimace, laugh and cry. They open their eyes and seem to glance about; on closer inspection, however, their eyeballs are seen to be moving in uncoordinated, random directions, and there is no visual input to the brain.

The comatose sorely test our intuitions about the boundary between life and death. What precisely does "death" mean? Is it primarily a biological, philosophical or religious concept? How can we tell for sure if someone has been grimly reaped? Is there some metaphysical event, analogous to the departure of the soul from the body, that marks the moment? Today the need for organ transplants gives these questions practical urgency, just as in previous centuries the danger of premature burial did. People used to harbor a very real fear that they might be declared dead and put in the ground while still alive. And the macabre eighteenth-century tales about exhumed corpses found to have clawed at the interior of the casket were not wholly fanciful: graveyard excavations reveal that nearly 2 percent of those interred before the advent of embalming in the twentieth century were buried alive. One of the first physicians to agitate for a clear index of death was the Englishman Jean-Jacques Winslow, who in 1740 proposed putrefaction as the sure sign. It is notable that Winslow himself was prematurely interred twice as a child.

Whatever death is, it ought to be permanent and irreversible. And if there is anything on which thanatologists have always agreed, it is that the state of death is characterized by the irreversible cessation of something or other. For centuries the "something" was obvious enough: breathing and heartbeat. The permanent loss of breath was held to mark the disunion of soul and body. (Both the Greek and the Latin terms for soul—"*anima*" and "*pneuma*"—mean "breath"; the etymology of "soul" itself is unknown.) But in the late 1950s new medical gadgetry began to be developed that could take over the functions of the heart and lungs. With the artificial respiration of brain-damaged patients now possible, the continuance of breathing and circulation became disjoined from the continuance of faculties linked with the soul: thought, feeling, memory, rationality. The seat of these, of course, is the brain, which is also the locus of personal identity. "I left my heart in San Francisco"—that is a conceptual possibility; "I left my *brain* in San Francisco"—not likely.

Clearly, the boundary between life and death would have to be redrawn, with neurological criteria taking the place of cardio-respiratory ones. Who would do it? The Catholic Church, for one, proved reluctant; in the 1958 proclamation "The Prolongation of Life," Pope Pius XII submitted that this was rather a matter for physicians to decide. A decade later, a clear concept emerged: "brain death." The 1968 Harvard Medical School Ad Hoc Committee to Examine the Definition

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of Brain Death defined it as a state entailing a total unawareness of external stimuli, no spontaneous breathing and a flat brain wave. "Our primary purpose," said the committee's report, "is to define irreversible coma as a new criterion of death."

This is where matters get a bit confusing. Being in a coma, even an irreversible one, turns out to be not the same thing as being brain-dead by the Harvard criteria. Comatose patients typically have "slow" brain waves, not flat ones. Moreover, unless there is substantial damage elsewhere in the body, they are always able to breathe spontaneously, without the use of ventilators. When the plug was pulled on Karen Quinlan, for instance, she surprised everyone by wheezing along on her own for more than a decade.

In fact, there are two different concepts of brain death: "whole-brain death," where both the cerebral cortex (upper brain) and the brain stem (lower brain) irreversibly cease to function; and "higher-brain death," where only the cerebral cortex has sustained terminal damage and the brain stem is largely intact. What the Harvard criteria were aiming at was the more conservative of these, whole-brain death. This state is tantamount to decapitation. Once the brain stem stops functioning, traditional heart-lung death invariably follows within a week or so, even with the most aggressive support of life-sustaining gadgetry. Thus it is not possible for someone to be both whole-brain dead and at the same time in a persistent coma. The whole-brain standard was endorsed in 1983 by the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine, and has since become statute law in more than thirty states. Only a few states have adopted the broader higher-brain criterion. As for the rest of the world, virtually every industrialized country has accepted the whole-brain criterion as legal death, except, weirdly, Japan.

By one interpretation of brain death, Sunny von Bulow is indisputably alive. By the other, she is presumably dead. Which standard ought we to embrace? Reflecting on this question tends to bubble the intuition. The image of a permanently comatose but still breathing human in a coffin or crematory *is* a distasteful one. If the breathing is spontaneous, there is no respirator to be unplugged so that the patient can be "allowed" to die before burial/cremation. She must be suffocated, or starved to death by the removal of nourishment—which, unlike a respirator, cannot be deemed an "extraordinary" means of sustaining life. This may be excused as morally inconsequential, but it is still killing. (The preferred form of euthanasia today is somewhat subtler: since the comatose patient typically must be given medication to maintain his heart rate, and since required dosage increases over time, all one needs to do is set fixed levels of such medication; death ensues even though no treatment was actually withdrawn.) When, in 1986, the American Medical Association pronounced it ethical for physicians to withdraw care from comatose patients who met the criteria of higher-brain death, there was no implication that such patients were actually dead.

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On the other hand, the destruction of the higher brain is thought not only to strip the individual of all psychological attributes—to wit, of personhood—but also to entail the irreversible loss of consciousness. And it is certainly plausible to maintain, as Schopenhauer did, that "death itself consists merely in the moment that consciousness vanishes." (On second thought, this can't be *exactly* right; if Jones suffers brain death while he is asleep, his death does not date from the moment he falls asleep.) Can a life of permanent unconsciousness—where the very possibility of having experiences is irretrievably lost—really be considered a *human* life? From the subjective point of view, is it in any way distinguishable from death?

Sunny von Bulow was lucky enough to inherit a fortune of about $75 million. There is plenty of money to pay for her hospital room, her around-the-clock nursing care and so forth, and her heirs are willing to see it spent in this way. When, by contrast, in one Veterans Administration hospital an irreversibly comatose patient survived ten years and ran up a bill for millions of dollars, the bill was paid with public money. Even if

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some small, intrinsic value were attributed to maintaining the vegetative functions of a human organism when the person formerly incarnated in it has vanished, it would hardly justify this sort of expenditure. Some go as far as to argue that such maintenance has a *negative* ethical value, inasmuch as it is an affront to human dignity, condemning the human person to what one ethicist described as "an eternity of exile," like the Flying Dutchman or the Wandering Jew.

Suppose, then, we were to redefine death to mean the irreversible loss of consciousness, the (earthly) extinction of the person, as opposed to the organism. Two snags remain. First, how can we make sure the loss is in fact irreversible? Two kinds of coma are known to be reversible: those resulting from drug overdose and those caused by the lowering of the body temperature below ninety degrees. Judging the odds of reversibility in other cases can be tricky. Even with the help of external brain scans, making a diagnosis of higher-brain death (as distinct from widespread cortical damage) is scarcely infallible. People *do* snap out of comas from time to time, a fact that raises doubts about whether PVS suffices for a diagnosis of brain death.

Item. In 1984 a Long Island youth named David Gribin went into a coma after sustaining severe head injuries in a horse-riding accident, and was placed on a respirator. After a month of unconsciousness, though, he revived. Eight years later, in 1992, he became the first coma victim to complete the New York City marathon.

Item. On March 5, 1991, a High Point, North Carolina, man who had been comatose since he had been beaten with a log more than eight years earlier suddenly regained consciousness and revealed to authorities the identities of his two assailants.

Item. In 1981 Artur Lundkvist, a Swedish poet, novelist and member of the committee that awards the Nobel Prize for literature, suffered a massive heart attack while delivering a lecture on Anthony Burgess, and fell into a coma. The doctors did not expect him to regain his faculties. Two months later he woke up and related a fantastic series of visions he had had while supposedly unconscious. These were later described in his book *Journeys in Dream and Imagination* (1992). While his body was lying immobile in intensive care, Lundkvist's spirit flew over Vietnam, to an alien planet where cows produced blue milk, to a Chicago train station where doctors operated on white people to make them black. He watched green saplings emerge from between his toes, saw cubist birds and met people who were long dead.

Lundkvist's case raises a second problem with redefining death to mean higher-brain death. How extensive must the damage to the cerebral cortex be before the constituents of consciousness and personhood—faculties such as imagination, feeling and desire—are actually obliterated? Must both hemispheres be destroyed, or only one? Must all electrical activity in the higher brain cease, or only the appearance of certain characteristic brain waves correlated with conscious thought? The danger here is the slippery slope, as the dire need for transplant organs pressures doctors to be more and more liberal about declaring potential donors dead.

Because of ethical obstacles to experimenting on human brains, not a great deal is known about the neural locale of consciousness. It is certainly possible that, even with the cessation of higher-brain function, some rudimentary cognitive capacity remains as long as the brain stem and other systems deeper in the brain are working. And even if consciousness does turn out to reside exclusively in the cerebral cortex, some opponents of the higher-brain death standard refuse to concede that personal identity can be defined purely in terms of consciousness. One such, the British philosopher David Lamb, maintains that uncertainty over which mental processes are constitutive of personhood "can only be avoided by accepting the proposal that the point where loss of personhood is certain is when the brain as a whole, and hence the organism as a whole, no longer functions." And that moment, he adds, is "when the brain stem dies."

In the face of these difficulties, it is tempting to adopt a thanatological agnosticism. Some maintain, for example, that death is simply the name we give to a person's condition when certain social "death behaviors" come to be considered appropriate: mourning, reading of the will, arranging for the Social Security checks to stop and so on. Perhaps, the logic goes, there is no need to impose a single standard of mortality on everyone, and each person should be allowed to choose his own, specifying it in advance. This proposal would require some minimal neurological sophistication on the part of every citizen, of course. It would require reflection on what kind of mental or biological functions constitute one's personhood; and some glancing consideration of the many unfortunate people who are short a liver or a kidney. It would require each person to contemplate his death with a cold clarity, like a mathematical theorem. What standard of death would *you* choose?

What standard would Sunny von Bulow have chosen? She was decisive when it came to flowers, caviar and Parisian couture, but she was also pathologically shy, and musing on the precise moment when one checks out is a rather shy-making proposition. So it remains for us to consider: On which side of the mortal brink is she frozen in time? Perhaps there is still a guttering flame of consciousness within her ruined brain, whose fluid-bearing ventricles have by now almost entirely usurped the place of the cerebral cortex. Perhaps, utterly abstracted from empirical reality, she is having endless hallucinatory visions in which she presides over grand, glittering parties at Clarendon Court, with—or possibly without—Claus at her side. The very thought makes her opening line in *Reversal of Fortune* almost unbearably poignant: "Brain-dead—body better than ever!" •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Spanish Light

Here's a big, bounteous basket of delights. A new, sun-filled film brims with the best kind of escapism: 108 minutes of free sexuality, pleasant comradeship, mature perceptions and complete tolerance. Even death, as treated here, is the result of comic eccentricity.

Belle Epoque (Sony Pictures Classics), despite its French title, is Spanish. Made in 1992, it's set in 1931, when the Spanish monarchy was ending and the (short-lived) republic was coming in. Though this is hardly a political picture, few will ignore that it's a backward look from the present democracy, over stormy decades, to a lost, bittersweet paradise.

The center of the story is a shy yet strong youth who strikes it lucky. Fernando, a deserter from the army, is befriended by Manolo, a well-to-do, cranky-lovable, old artist-intellectual who lives in a fine, if weedy, villa far out in the countryside.

Fernando stays with Manolo some days and mixes with his friends, including a nicely tacky old priest, Don Luis, who reminisces about his friendship with Unamuno. Then Manolo outfits the youth with a new suit and takes him to the railroad station to see him off for Madrid on the train that is bringing Manolo's four daughters home. The young women get off the train; Fernando does not get on.

After missing the train, he asks for shelter because there is no inn in the village. Dryly, comprehendingly, Manolo invites him to stay—and the bulk of the film results. The details are full of warmth and chuckle. I omit most of them here; I note chiefly that, in his modest yet quite male way, with a temper that blends Candide and Schweik, Fernando attracts each of the young women.

The oldest is Clara, who was lately widowed by a freak accident yet is unbowed. Then comes Violeta, a lesbian who, at a masquerade ball, knows how to deal with Fernando. Next is Rocio, the most luscious and flirtatious, pursued by a rich young neighborhood goof but nonetheless responsive to Fernando. Luz, the youngest, high-spirited, is the one virgin of the group and is not content with her status.

What comes out of this sexual carousel is a high charge of eroticism, jealousy, misunderstandings and understandings, but above all there is a general feeling of good will, as if Manolo's villa, with this atheist as god, is a male-female Eden in which anything can happen if it is not malevolent.

The Edenic tone is amplified, not reduced, when Manolo's wife, Amalia, mother of the daughters, returns. She is a singer who principally tours South America with her French manager-lover (Manolo knows and accepts). One morning her large automobile suddenly appears; she descends from it and sings. The windows of the villa open one by one in the sunlight—in a scene reminiscent of the country house in *Jules and Jim*—as the daughters in their rooms, Manolo in his, wave and Fernando up in the attic leans out to find out what's going on.

The film ends more or less the way we want it to—"more or less" because if it ended with a different union, that wouldn't be bad, either. Spain's government changes at the end of the story, but it would be laborious to see this as symbolic: it's merely atmospheric. More relevant, tonally, are the deaths in the picture. At the start Fernando is arrested by two civil guards for desertion, and the sequence ends with the murder of one guard by the other, then the second's suicide. It sounds Dostoyevskian, but it's treated as the ridiculousness of strict conventions carried to extremes. Later, the weary priest hangs himself. This anti-canonical act seems the priest's last reply in his argument with Unamuno, one of whose books is clutched in his hand. His death, too, exemplifies the absurdity-in-extreme of rigid views.

Garlanding the makers of this glowing film, let's begin with the cinematographer, José Luis Alcaine, who has worked with several fine Spanish directors. His work here is notable for its love. He loves the face of every person in this picture, and he treats every one of them—not least the young women—with lighting that makes him or her, for the moment, the reason for the film's being. Alcaine's feeling for place, too, is extraordinary. In one shot Fernando sits alone on a red bench in the deserted railway station. Simple though it sounds, it is wonderful. It makes us feel, purely and intensely, that we are immersed in Spain.

Alcaine has worked before with this

FILMS WORTH SEEING

In the Name of the Father. *About the Guildford Four, the Irish people wrongly accused of terrorism in England. Daniel Day-Lewis as the principal "criminal" and Emma Thompson as the barrister who rights the wrong are electrifying in different ways. (Reviewed 1/3/94)* **Philadelphia.** *Tom Hanks convinces and moves us as a young lawyer dying of AIDS. Denzel Washington supports strongly as his lawyer in a discrimination suit. (1/10&17/94)* **Schindler's List.** *Steven Spielberg's re-creation of a German's benevolent act during the Holocaust. Monumental. Overwhelming. (12/13/93 and 1/24/94)* **Wayne's World 2.** *Two T.V. zanies in an Illinois town try to stage a rock concert. With Mike Myers and Dana Carvey. Much of it is wackily amusing. (2/14/94)* **—SK**

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director, Fernando Trueba, an exceptionally gifted man, who was of course involved in the moments just described. Born in 1955, Trueba is a widely experienced director, much celebrated at home. The only previous film of his I've seen is *Opera Prima* (1982), an engaging madrilene comedy, but he has done many kinds of films. (He produced a series of four one-hour films on primitive art directed by the American Philip Haas, who later directed the phenomenal *Music of Chance.*)

Trueba says that he chose the French title because it was such a *belle époque* for his protagonist; but possibly, too, he liked it because it's French and suggests Renoir. He says that Renoir is one of his gods, and if he hadn't said it, *Belle Epoque* would have told us anyway.

The original story is by him, José Luis García Sanchez and Rafael Azcona, and Azcona wrote the screenplay. Azcona is one of those figures like Jean-Claude Carrière, little noted by the public but a real contributing power in film. Trueba considers him the most important of Spanish screenwriters ever; at any rate, we know that he wrote *La Grande Bouffe* for Marco Ferreri, has written five screenplays for Carlos Saura and one for Luis García Berlanga—plus a previous script for Trueba. To put it reticently, Azcona is skillful.

Fernando is played by Jorge Sanz, who was in *Lovers* opposite Victoria Abril and who here shows a nice blend of modesty and self. Manolo is richly grumbled and teased along by Fernando Fernán Gómez, veteran of theater and film who has himself directed more than twenty films. Few viewers here will know these facts, but all will know that they are enjoying an actor of experience and dexterous humor.

The four young women are Miriam Díaz-Aroca as the emotionally unquiet widow; Ariadna Gil, icily fierce as the lesbian; Maribel Verdú (who also was in *Lovers*) as the ripe Rocio; and Penélope Cruz as the impulsive youngest. Their mother, the singer, is done by a well-known singer, Mary Carmen Ramírez, with fit theatricality. Two fine senior actors—Agustín González as the easy-going priest, Michel Galabru as the manager-lover—round out the curtain call.

All of them, and many not named, deserve a salute and a blown kiss—for adding tang and pleasure to our film-going lives. •

To Catch A Thief

By Michael Levenson

Genet: A Biography by Edmund White

(Knopf, 728 pp., $35)

In the interwar Europe of your mind's eye—quick now, before the image fades—picture a ragged figure walking across a tense expanse. Passports now guard borders; the smell of war is everywhere; populations gird themselves for mass mobilization. But there walked Genet. Through the failing '30s, in his impoverished 20s, he passed across the tightening borders, dirty, hungry, indifferent to politics, laughing at morality, alive with churning eroticism. He cruised, he stole, he betrayed and when he was arrested he found a perfect home for his imagination within the prison walls.

It must still stand as one of our century's most complexly resonant cultural episodes. An unknown thief, a military deserter, a hardened graduate of the Mettray reform colony experiences sexual delight inside prison; the fantasies of taking pleasure with murderers and traitors luxuriate into richly ornamental stories. On his knees in his cell he writes down his daydreams on coarse paper, until over time they take on the structure of art. At his own expense he pays for the printing of a poem, "The Man Condemned to Death," dedicated to the murderer Maurice Pilorge.

In and out of French prisons during the years of the Nazi occupation, always writing best when he is incarcerated, he finishes his first novel, *Our Lady of the Flowers.* Then he meets Jean Cocteau, who reads the book, which he calls the "Genet bomb," "the great event of the epoch." Disturbed, fascinated, anxious, awe-struck, eager, distant: Cocteau finally resolves these feelings into generous patronage, and with his help *Our Lady of the Flowers* has an underground printing in 1943 that lets the book circulate through the war-ravaged culture car-

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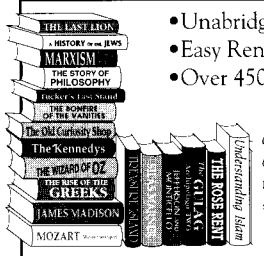

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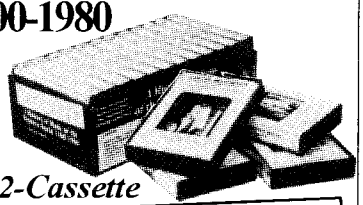
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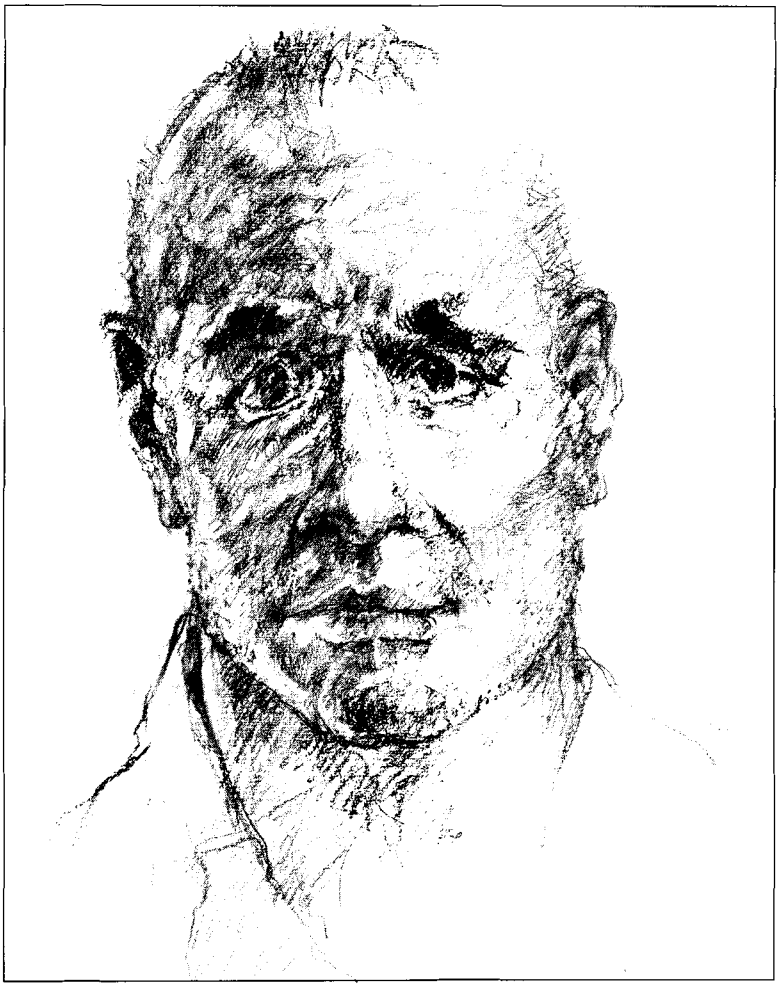
rying its own explosive charge. By the time the hostilities close, Genet has become the celebrated poet/thief, the scandalous homosexual/novelist, who quickly published four more novels that attacked and thrilled his doting readers.

The membrane between Genet's solitude and Genet's celebrity was so thin, and he passed so quickly through it, that he seems never to have overcome the uncanniness of the change. Lice-ridden, neglected, hungry, humiliated—and then published, feted, desired, acknowledged. A part of the legend that he self-consciously built for himself, and that we others have seized upon, is the story of this miracle: the dirty human atom transformed into the glittering artist. But the more difficult part of his legend is the reversibility of the miracle. In the middle of his success, he was always the little thief. Everything and nothing had changed for Genet. "I am a little old man," he wrote in his 50s, when he was a famous writer and financially secure, "who drags himself from one country to another, not being able to find where he can stop. I'm not complaining. I was born a vagabond ... My true homeland is any old train station. I have a suitcase, underwear and four photos...." This was no affectation; it was a life.



JEAN GENET BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

A familiar approach to Genet places him safely under the rubric of the "literature of evil," whose most celebrated exemplars are Sade and Baudelaire. Doubtless he belongs there; but to absorb him within that lineage is to miss the extent to which the life and the life-inspired works break free of the polite category "literature." We care for Genet only partly because of the remarkable writings, the five novels and the four great plays. Indeed, the writing occupied a relatively small space within his personal history, which is fully as interesting. The novels were composed in the years 1942 to 1948; *The Maids* shortly thereafter; and the three late plays—*The Balcony*, *The Screens*, *The Blacks*—were drafted between 1955 and 1957. Around these periods of astonishing achievement looms the infinite personal tangle: the poverty, the theft, the imprisonment, the lovers, the fame, the suicidal depression. Like anyone else, Genet was driven by his desires and his circumstances, and like almost no one else, he fully recognized his life as an artifact, something to be studied and shaped, molded and displayed. But life has a way of going on, and then going on some more. It is both the heroism and the pathos of Genet that his self-inventions kept collapsing in the face of new events, new people, new politics.

The shock of the early books, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, *The Miracle of the Rose*, *Funeral Rites*, lies in Genet's ability to touch the spot that gives moral shivers even to right-thinking progressives. In *The Thief's Journal* he describes how a passion for Lucien grows when he learns that the boy used to follow the Gestapo. "The French Gestapo," writes Genet, "contained two fascinating elements: treason and theft. With homosexuality added, it would be sparkling, unassailable. It would possess the three virtues, which I set up as theological...." This was the deadly serious game on which his life was based: an inversion of the scale of values, relentlessly, systematically performed. "I have thus been that little wretch, who knew only hunger, physical humiliation, poverty, fear and degradation. From such galling attitudes as these I have drawn reasons for glory." To his judges, his response is not, "How dare you call this life abject?" It is rather, "Yes, it is abject, more abject than you know, and in its abjection I will see splendor."

The plots of his works evaporate under paraphrase. A man mourns his Communist lover by imagining exotic sexual ceremonies with fascists (*Funeral Rites*); a prisoner worships a fellow inmate, the murderer of a young girl, who then kills a guard as a way to hasten his glorious march toward death (*The Miracle of the Rose*); inside a brothel, prostitutes and their clients strike elaborate social poses of power and violence, but who will play the chief of police? (*The Balcony*). The stories are meager, but their force is extraordinary. Genet's great stroke is to concentrate upon a few proscribed gestures in order, as he once put it, to develop the monstrosities until they turn into beauty.

In this stagy, sexy project of reversing the entire moral logic of a culture, the surface challenges—the parading transvestites, the proud murderers, the insolent thieves—are as nothing next to the challenge of the voice that conjures them: "My victory is verbal." Language lets convicts and flowers join in a single phrase; it wraps indignity in gorgeous metaphor:

> The atmosphere of the planet Uranus appears to be so heavy that the ferns there are creepers; the animals drag along, crushed by the weight of the gases. I want to mingle with these humiliated creatures which are always on their bellies. If metapsychosis should grant me a new dwelling place, I choose that forlorn planet, I inhabit it with the convicts of my race.

Turned to wickedly corrosive purposes, language confuses the boundaries on which the Good and the True and the Just depend. And if language is the

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instrument, the life is the material, with Genet continually offering up his own name and his own humiliations as the body on which words work. What he writes of his relation to Lucien describes also his relation to us:

> I therefore require that he know about my prostitution and that he acknowledge it. That he know the details of my pettiest larcenies, that he suffer thereby and that he accept them. That he also know about my background and my homosexuality, my cowardice, my peculiar imagination which wishes on me a mother who is an old thief with a pale, shifty-looking face; my gesture for begging alms; my voice, which I used to crack and muffle, in keeping with a convention recognized by both beggars and bourgeois; my ingenious way, which I myself invented, of accosting queers; my faggoty carryings-on; my shame in the presence of good-looking boys....

Now Edmund White has confronted the provocation of this life, and has composed his big biography with a coolly inspiring professionalism. For the first time Genet's self-mythology has a successful rival: the life as composed by the infinitely scrupulous biographer. White has had the stiff-backed stamina of a researcher who knows that the next archive, the next interview, might add just one detail that will reward a week's work. Now at last we can situate Genet within a richly saturated context of those others with whom he shared his legendary life. Genet and his patron Cocteau; Genet and his lovers; Genet and his agents and translators; Genet with the Black Panthers and among the Palestinians: White gives us the man not as the self-created singular being but as one knot, perhaps tighter than the rest, within a web of human relations.

Born in 1910 and left by his unwed mother in a home for foundlings, he was placed with a foster family in the farming village of Alligny-en-Morvan. In later years he preferred to evoke his childhood as a continuous ordeal at the hands of the respectable authorities: the parents, the teachers, the magistrates. But White has energetically ferreted out enough details—interviewing schoolmates sixty-five years after the fact—to build a convincing counterpicture. He recovers an image of Genet's secure home life with his fond foster mother, his successful school career, his participation in the church choir. In place of the child castaway, White gives the aloof and pampered dandy, arrogantly speaking his good French instead of the patois, refusing to work in the fields. He also shows that Genet consistently played down his ongoing engagement with the French literary tradition and tended to conceal his connections with the intellectual establishment, patterns of evasion clearly designed to heighten the mythology of the naked genius.

And it is not just the mythologizing Genet against whom White is writing, but also that grand partner in the projection of the legend, Jean-Paul Sartre. During the late war years Sartre, too, discovered Genet and his fiction; and the two men became significant figures in one another's lives. In the early '50s, when the *Complete Works* of Genet began (prematurely) to appear, the first volume was Sartre's vast and monumental study, *Saint Genet* (1952), offered as supreme intellectual validation of a daring publishing venture. It has been buried under the many waves of French fashion that have followed, but its time should come round again.

What is extraordinary about the book is that it concentrates on this one living self, this Genet, with all the power of understanding that a brilliant philosopher had achieved. It was a rare chance, which they both recognized and seized. They talked and talked, and then Sartre wrote and wrote. The large task, the noble task, was to record the countless, heavy constraints on this one subjectivity, the constraints of social demand, the constraints of family order, and then to show that after you have accounted for all these powerful causalities, you still have not accounted for Genet. You have not explained how a self reduced to almost nothing discovered a way out of a frightful impasse and from within the unrelenting grip of necessity still found a path to freedom.

Sartre once remarked that he said more about freedom in *Saint Genet* than anywhere else, no doubt because Genet's life dramatized the awful limitations that can narrow freedom until it seems to reach its vanishing point. In a powerful piece of conjecture, Sartre evokes an image of the young Genet as "a fake child." As a ward of the state whose fate is administered through a distant Parisian bureaucracy, he knows obscurely that he does not belong to the family in the village; he recognizes that he is not a child as others are children, not innocent as they are innocent. He has nothing of his own—no mother, no identity, no heritage—and this is the cruelest handicap within a society that defines being as having. The first act of stealing, suggests Sartre, was a desperate attempt to have, to possess, to own, in order "*to be like others.*" And yet at some point the boy was caught. A voice spoke, "You are a thief," and beneath all the weight of peasant morality, "thief" became the child's essence. If he had

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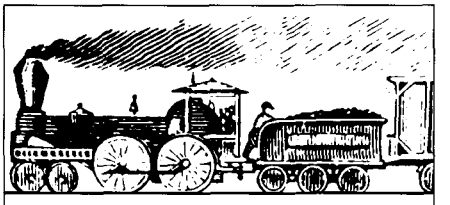

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been older, he could have retorted to the charge, could have called the villagers themselves scoundrels and returned blow for verbal blow. But for a helpless child there was no possibility of denial. The verdict was too heavy to dislodge. "Trapped like a rat," the young Genet, the thief, the welfare child, can only be what they say he is.

Suppose, though, that he does more than accept the name "thief." Suppose that he affirms it, embraces it, celebrates it, wills it, wants it. In Sartre's portrait, he was hemmed into the tightest net of circumstance; Genet had almost no room left for choice, but he could still choose what he could not in any case avoid. As Sartre eloquently puts it: "We are not lumps of clay, and what is important is not what people make of us but what we ourselves make of what they have made of us."

Genet may not be able to escape his fate, but he can at least choose to affirm it. "It was a constraint; he makes of it his mission." Or as Genet has it, "I decided to be what crime made me." Nothing like the early visionary freedom of Sartrean existentialism exists for Genet: most of the world's choices are well beyond his reach. But this is exactly what made him so important for Sartre at this important moment in his postwar thought. Genet taught him how freedom could live even within the most tightly circumscribed bounds. "This," Sartre will write, "is the limit I would today accord to freedom: the small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him."

The last chapter of Sartre's book is called "Please Use Genet Properly," and with canny insight it records the temptation to turn Genet into a specimen. From the start he was not only widely considered the most exciting writer of the day; he was made to stand for the thug-artist, the unashamed homosexual, the criminal with taste, the pet Parisian monster. Sartre, too, sees him as a monster, but as one who reflects our own monstrosity. In his solitude, his fakery, his failure, his sophism, "Genet is we," says Sartre: his guilt is the mirror image of our guilty age. We blame him, as history will blame us.

Sartre's Genet has been such a compelling picture for the last forty years that it must rank as one of White's achievements to have broken its spell. Under the withering good sense of his biography, the romanticism of Sartre's Genet and Genet's Genet steadily diminishes. Taken altogether, White's research accumulates into an entirely new version of the life, which gives it a daily texture and a common sadness. White humanizes the saint. In place of Genet as spirit of the age, we have an erratic writer of genius, inspired, cranky, often frightened, often depressed, generous and self-denying but also cynical and exploitative, vigorous but maimed, hobbling on his bad heel, addicted to Nembutal.

And yet even this strong biography, sensible and indispensable, can go only so far in controlling the disturbance of the "Genet bomb." Several years ago, in his introduction to *Prisoner of Love*, Genet's posthumously published memoir of his time with the Black Panthers and the Palestinians, White had struggled with one of Genet's most difficult challenges. White wrote:

> Throughout his long career Genet maintained a purported admiration for *treachery* that I've never comprehended. I recognize that a prisoner might be *forced* to betray his friends, but how can one be *proud* of such a failing? Philosophically, Genet was no doubt being systematic in affirming everything that is negative, in reversing all values. But *humanly* what could such a claim mean? ... Finally I've decided that "treachery" is Genet's code word for the incorrigible subjective voice that can never be factored into the consensus.

One understands the problem. You admire this writer, you lend out your imagination, you see his body of work as one that surely counts and then you see a belief so opposed to your own that you cannot accept it as a real conviction. But no matter how comprehensible, White's "translation" of Genet's cult of treachery is weak and unworthy. Betrayal is everywhere in Genet's work, its beauties, its eroticism. ("Anyone who hasn't experienced the ecstasy of betrayal knows nothing about ecstasy at all.") If treachery is only a "code word" for subjective voice, then it will take very little code-breaking to turn the dangerous Genet into a cozy literary favorite.

As impressive as White's biography is, it does contain such moments of convenient "translation," the smoothing out of Genet's provocation, so that we can place him more comfortably in the tradition of the great French writers of the past 150 years: Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Proust. No doubt he belongs there, but is it really because we can read the most challenging aspects of his revolt as a cipher for his "humanly" acceptable values?

In White's reconstruction a decisive break occurs in the early '50s. Just as Sartre is offering the secret of the life, White's Genet is beginning a new one. The key incident occurs on a train, when Genet glances across at another passenger, an ugly man who glances back at him; in the instant of the look, Genet will later write, one identity flowed into another, and he suddenly recognized that "every man is worth every other." White plausibly sees this as a luminous moment for Genet, but implausibly heightens it into a threshold to a completely different existence:

> Before this moment he was a novelist; afterwards, a playwright. Before he was a dandy; afterwards, he lost interest in his appearance.... Before, his lovers were crooks or whores; afterwards, they would be artists.... Before, he wrote about himself, the diabolical individualist; afterwards, he became the poet of the dispossessed of the world.

This is absurd, and not only because it warps the biographical record. Genet had already written plays, and his most serious engagement with the "dispossessed of the world" will come three decades later in the novelistic *Prisoner of Love*. More significantly, however, White's over-reading distorts because it tries to arrange this most fluid of lives into the compartments of a tight, dry box.

A change there incontestably was, and White's biography is strongest and most confident in its rendering of the post-*Saint Genet* years, when Genet's connections to the social world steadily thickened. From *The Balcony* through *The Blacks* to *The Screens*, Genet's radical imagination comes increasingly into accord with a radical politics. In 1968 Genet enjoys and supports the May revolution as it sweeps through the streets of Paris. In the summer he travels to the Democratic Convention in Chicago as part of an *Esquire* reporting team that includes Allen Ginsberg and Terry Southern, and with his partners Genet leaps into the thick of the Chicago cataclysm. While on this visit, he begins to focus on the United States as the caldron of world repression and comes to locate hope in the struggle of the Black Panthers. He now assumes a perpetual political readiness, well-captured in an anecdote from one of his rare interviews:

> Two members of the Black Panther Party came to see me in Paris [in 1970] and asked me if I could help them. I think their idea was that I should help them in Paris but I said, "the simplest thing is to go to America." This answer seemed to me to surprise them a bit. They said, "All right, come. When do you want to leave?" I said: "Tomorrow!" They were still more astonished at first but they reacted: "Very well, we'll come and pick you up."

No one needs to doubt that Genet discovered sympathies and affinities in the desperation of others, but a passage like this one suggests that he, too, was lost in the '60s fun house, and that even when

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he had become an intense political agent, he couldn't stop watching himself in the mirrors. If Genet often seems scarcely distinct from many other celebrity politicos of the period, it's not because he lacked real fire, but because the real fire was engulfed in the media flames. He had once said that the terror of Nazi Germany was that the contrast between the police and the criminal had vanished, and in the last phase of his own life the wavering contrast between outcast and celebrity created a terrible confusion of its own.

In the late '60s he discovered the Palestinian cause, and between 1970 and 1972 he traveled several times to the Middle East, developing personal ties to many in the Fatah movement, and briefly meeting Yasir Arafat. For the rest of his life, he kept up his ardent support for Palestinian nationalism, even as he kept alive his warm memories of the Black Panthers. Over more than a decade he tried and failed to turn these experiences into a book. Through his 70s, aging, losing confidence, losing friends, he considered himself finished as a writer.

Then abruptly in the last years of his life, when he knew that he was dying of throat cancer, he roused himself to compose the loosely stitched memoir *Prisoner of Love*, in which the early erotics and the late politics perform an awkward dance. Although the book has its luminous moments, they are fading embers. Genet had waited so long to write his book that by the time he began his political passion was largely spent. *Prisoner of Love* gives burned-out memories of old excitement: conversations in the Palestinian refugee camps, a visit to war-ravaged Beirut, a night passed in an underground shelter. In its rare spiky moments it also gives the pessimism of the dying Genet, who meditates on the trials of writing, the anarchy of sex and the futility of a political struggle that is only "dangerous for a thousandth of a second."

It's not hard to understand why Edmund White would want to read this career as a tale of two phases, a Literature of Evil succeeded by a Politics of Literature, with an incident on a train marking the sharp boundary between them. A look at another human creature; an instant of revelation; and a politics is born. It would be good for biographers if lives were like this, and good for White if Genet's life were like this.

In fact this biography is far better than its theses. Even as it rehearses its claim for Genet's recognition that every life is worth every other, it faithfully records the persistence of the "evil" Genet, the one who (even after the famous glance) still thieves, deceives, exploits, manipulates and breaks friendships; the one who promises his publisher a book on Mozart simply in order to collect an advance; the one who says that "I had to work hard to betray my friends, but in the end it was worth it."

Yes, White is right: it is one thing to write out sexual fantasies in prison and another to give speeches on behalf of jailed Black Panthers. But the difference, though decisive, is as impure as everything else in Genet. Although he came to see close connections between his personal humiliations and the conditions of oppressed groups, he could never lose himself within collective identity. His long, passionate commitment to the Palestinians included the biting awareness that "the day the Palestinians become institutionalized, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I will no longer be there." White quotes this passage several times, but really he can't quote it enough.

Genet's was an impossible politics. Cherishing the sublimity of failure, he thought that the Panthers and the Palestinians would give him comrades in permanent exile, and it is without regret that he calls the Palestinian struggle as "desperate as a man who falls in the sea and can't swim." For all the exhausting efforts of his fifteen years of activism, he well knew that his politics were always on the point of dissolving into the fantasy of the asocial solitary who dreams in order to survive. "What nonsense!" he writes in a notebook entry cited by White. "I've never helped the Palestinians. They've helped me to live." Even more telling is the remark, "I would like the world not to change so that I can be against the world." Here is the simple lucid statement of his life's contradiction: he is doomed to love the law he hates.

The most honest and disturbing response may be to admit that Genet's achievement lies not only in the brilliant books, but also in the vile morality. When he chooses betrayal as a reigning virtue and he lives out that choice, he carries revolt to one cold extreme. Pursued at significant personal cost, even through the years of fame, that revolt has the appeal of any great refusal: it cannot be rationalized by art-talk or by the language of political hope. And while we continue dreaming of the good society to come, Genet calls from beyond the grave, demanding that we spare a thought for the brave bad whom we are trying to leave behind.

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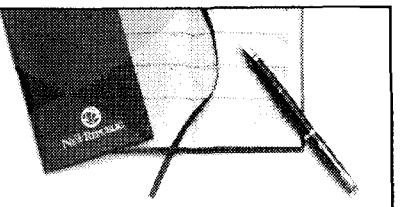

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The Disloyalist

By Edmund S. Morgan

The Man in the Mirror: A Life of Benedict Arnold by Clare Brandt

(Random House, 384 pp., $25)

It seems not very long ago that psycho-history was proclaimed as the wave of the future in historiography. That future never materialized, but biographers have always been in some sense psycho-historians. A careful biographer may spend years with her subject, studying surviving documents until she may know more about a man than he could have known about himself. Events that he erased from memory may be preserved in his papers; and they may reveal patterns of behavior and motivation that he himself might not have acknowledged, but that make sense out of what he did with his life.

Clare Brandt is a careful biographer. She has spent many years with the surviving papers from Benedict Arnold's career, and she makes sense of his behavior. Nobody except other biographers can know as much about the man as she knows, and there would be no point in writing his biography without using her familiarity to make an educated guess at what made him tick. That is, after all, what we want from her. What made Arnold do what he did? We already know that he was an outstanding field general, "one of the best, if not *the* best fighting general at Washington's disposal." We already know that he turned traitor and tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to deliver Washington's stronghold at West Point to the British in 1780. Why did he do it?

Brandt vividly and fairly recounts his exploits, for and against the Americans, and she ventures into his psyche to tell us why he did them. The answer, she says, is simple. Although she never uses the word "sociopath," she finds Arnold motivated from an early age by a self-interest divorced from principle, except insofar as the appearance of a commitment to principle might advance that self-interest. Arnold coveted honor, and he coveted the money that he recognized as a necessary ingredient of the kind of honor he wanted, the honor that went with recognition as a gentleman. Deprived of a patrimony by his drunken father's bankruptcy when he was only 14, Arnold took pains to acquire money, legally and by means just short of illegal; and he took pains to acquire honor where it could indisputably be won, on the field of battle. No one, including Brandt, questions his military prowess. Physical cowardice, she says, was "the one human frailty to which he never yielded." His daring and leadership made him a public hero at the outset of the Revolution, in the capture of Ticonderoga, in the horrendous march to Canada in 1775 and in the crucial battle at Freeman's Farm that helped bring about Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga in 1777.

Unfortunately, as Brandt sees it, the public acclaim that Arnold won could never satisfy him because "outward approval was Arnold's only source of self-esteem, and he could never get enough of it." His father's bankruptcy, destroying his opportunities for higher education and social recognition, had gouged an "inner abyss" in his soul, so that "the space where self-assurance and self-respect should have developed was empty." The psychological insecurity that stayed with him from that trauma could be overcome only by constructing a house of mirrors (hence the title of Brandt's book) in which the reflected image always outshone the reality.

The image was continually assailed by the ingratitude of feckless and corrupt politicians who denied Arnold the full official honors that his heroism deserved and his ego required. One of the more glaring insults came when the Continental Congress promoted five other brigadiers to major general before him. Still worse was its acceptance of charges that he had used his official position, and the inside knowledge that it provided him, to engage in trade. A court-martial for what seemed like trivial offenses eventually resulted in an official reprimand, a mere slap on the wrist, but insufferable to a hero.

By that time, however, he had retreated so far into his house of mirrors, supported by a young and beautiful wife, that he had decided to seek honor from what he hoped and expected would be a more appreciative audience. Taking advantage of Washington's continuing favor, Arnold managed to secure command of West Point. In return for vague British promises of money, rank and honor, he would turn it over to the enemy and then win the war for them. In the end he was able to turn over only himself, for which he got precious little in either money or honor. Had he really held the patriotism he avowed, had he had the self-esteem to be content with a job well done, had he had a firmer grip on reality, he might have realized that the honor he sought would be compromised, even among the British, by his treachery. Instead he bought himself twenty years of obscurity in Canada and London, petitioning all the while for places and pensions that would at least enable him to live like a gentleman. As usual, he never got enough.

Brandt's explanation is convincing so far as it goes. There can probably be no better one. What makes it a little less than satisfying is that the man it describes sounds so much like his contemporaries and his peers that one has to wonder why it was only Arnold who went round the bend. Brandt has focused so closely on Arnold, moreover, that she may have missed some of the world in which he lived. She is not at her best in dealing with contemporary events: the capture of Ticonderoga in 1759 did not end the French and Indian War, colonial Connecticut did not have a royal governor, smuggling was not considered a patriotic act before the Revolution. She may also have underestimated the extent to which other Revolutionary heroes were obsessed with honor, even to the point where they could be diagnosed as insecure.

In his first military ventures, George Washington went through the same agonies over precedence that would afflict Arnold twenty years later. Washington threatened to resign his commission in the Virginia militia rather than suffer the dishonor of serving under a royal officer of lesser rank. Throughout his life, as he rose in public esteem, he worried continually about losing it if the next step he took should prove a false one. He debated with himself to the last minute before agreeing to attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787: his presence would help assure its success, but if he attended and it failed, his prestige would suffer. Washington, in short, had his own house of mirrors. What made his different from Arnold's was that he succeeded in making the real world conform to it.

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Honor has always been an elusive thing, difficult to attain, difficult to retain, difficult sometimes to ascertain. Title and precedence were so important to men like Arnold because they were visible signs of something that cannot be seen or touched, and that can be very short-lived. What makes for honor now may not matter a few years later. Grasp the insignia, therefore, while they are available. And in America, where titles of nobility were not to be had, military titles assumed an extra significance, especially for a man who had lost his patrimony.

Arnold's quest for money, for all its desperation, did not set him apart from others of his contemporaries who lived beyond their means and saw nothing very wrong in turning public office into private profit. Gentlemen, after all, were expected to live like gentlemen and not count the cost. Arnold made money in wartime Philadelphia in dubious ways after his wounds at Freeman's Farm disabled him from active service. But if he had done no worse than take advantage of his rank and his inside knowledge to engage in illicit trade, he would still be remembered as a military hero. Robert Morris, who managed the finances of the Continental Congress, mingled his own ventures with public ones so inextricably that he was never able to give an accounting of them. The peculations and the speculations of congressmen at the time were also notorious. They were not honored for them, but neither were they dishonored.

Even outright deception was not necessarily a bar to honor in the right circumstances. While Arnold has gone down in history as a villain, Nathan Hale has earned heroic status by spying for his country. The British agent and spy Major John André, with whom Arnold conspired to betray the citadel of West Point, earned a more than grudging respect, not only from his countrymen but from Americans, including Washington, who denied André's request for a firing squad and had him hanged, but recognized his courage.

What Hale and André shared, and what Arnold lacked, was loyalty. For all his obsession with honor, he seems not to have understood its dependence on loyalty. To be sure, loyalty in Anglo-America in the Revolutionary period was not always easy to assess. Americans had been proud of being part of Britain, and boastful of their superiority to the French (who deserved no honor because of their alleged poverty—they supposedly wore wooden shoes and never ate roast beef). Those who retained their British pride and acted on it after 1776 were known, and still are known, as "loyalists." They were not loved by the majority of Americans who joined the Revolution, embraced help from the French and thus abandoned their old loyalty; and, as in other civil wars, the two sides showed a good deal of ferocity toward each other. But after the war, reconciliation came surprisingly quickly, because paradoxically it was little more than loyalty that separated them, and with independence the meaning of loyalty changed.

Some of the most effective opponents of British treatment of the colonies became loyalists in 1776; and when Britain recognized American independence, many loyalists did the same and were able to take an active part in constructing the new republic. In Connecticut, Arnold's home state, William Samuel Johnson remained a staunch loyalist throughout the war, but by 1785 he was serving in Congress and in 1787 became one of the state's delegates to the federal Constitutional Convention. It was possible to change loyalties with honor in 1775 or 1776 and again after 1783.

Arnold apparently thought that it could be done in the years between. He had been among the first to cast off his loyalty to Britain and give it to the Revolutionists, more than a year before the Continental Congress was prepared to declare independence. There was no hesitation in his dedication to what he called "my country" and no doubt that by those words he meant the United Colonies that were to become the United States. Given the reluctance of Congress to sever ties with Britain, the speed with which American patriotism developed during the war is a little surprising today. But it could not have surprised Arnold, for he expressed it in words and fought for it with a zeal that won the admiration not only of the public but also of the men he commanded in one daring exploit after another. When a man continually risks his life for a cause to which he professes loyalty, it is hard to believe that he does not mean what he says.

Arnold probably did mean it at the time, but he was not the only one who had second thoughts, brought on by the way that the politicians ran the country and neglected to bestow honor where it was due in the late 1770s. Silas Deane, another Connecticut man, risked his life in seeking (and gaining) French assistance before his countrymen were willing to declare independence. Like Arnold, he used his inside knowledge to engage (with Robert Morris) in private trade; and like Arnold, and at about the same time, he decided that the politicians had betrayed him and that inde-

BENEDICT ARNOLD BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

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pendence had proved to be more a curse than a blessing. He, too, changed loyalties at the wrong time, was suspected of treason and was never forgiven for it.

Deane and Arnold both professed a continuing devotion to their country. They had simply concluded that their countrymen had been and would be better off under British rule. They persuaded themselves that they had done no more than what thousands of their countrymen had done in 1775 or 1776. And they had done so after the evidence was plain, in the conduct of Congress. Others, including Washington himself, shared their view of congressional behavior. But others somehow understood the meaning of loyalty as Deane and Arnold evidently did not. Though its meaning shifted with the course of events, others had no difficulty in grasping it.

What, then, was wrong with Deane and Arnold, and more specifically with Arnold? Did Arnold simply have no principles, no self-esteem, no moving power other than the pursuit of honor and advantage for himself? Perhaps. It was one thing to change loyalties as he did, and even as many others may have been tempted to do. But it was another thing to change them surreptitiously as he did, another thing to continue professing loyalty to one side while secretly working for the other. To plan treachery and expect to be honored for it evinces the very kind of blindness to reality that Brandt attributes to Arnold, lost in his house of mirrors.

And so she does make sense out of his behavior. Still, a doubt lingers. How could a man so courageous, so ambitious for honor and above all so intelligent, have been so wrong about his honor's dependence on his loyalty? Is it possible that Arnold really thought a return to British rule would be better for his countrymen as well as himself? Is it possible that he recognized what he was doing, the shame it would bring him and nevertheless followed a course that reason, albeit faulty reason, dictated? There was clearly something wrong in his understanding of himself, and of what honor demanded of him. But was it simply a total lack of principle? Perhaps that is as close as we can get to Arnold's psyche, closer perhaps than his own contemporaries could have reached. But how close is it? Granted his capacity for self-delusion, captured in Brandt's figure of a house of mirrors, the man who went from heroism to treachery in the pursuit of honor remains an enigma.

EDMUND S. MORGAN is Sterling Professor of History emeritus at Yale University.

Fear and Loathing in Vienna

BY ROY PORTER

Freud, Race and Gender
by Sander L. Gilman
(Princeton University Press, 277 pp., $24.95)

The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle
by Sander L. Gilman
(Johns Hopkins University Press, 320 pp., $31.95)

Is it a "Jewish science"? In our age of identity politics, it is no surprise that this question, answered in the affirmative by the Nazis, has insistently been asked of psychoanalysis. From David Bakan's *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* in 1958 to D.B. Klein's *The Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* in 1981, a succession of challenging books began to argue that psychoanalysis is a secret citadel quite unapproachable save for the key of Freud's Jewishness. Pursuing this line, recent biographers have maintained that Freud's upbringing was more Orthodox that he presented it, and new studies of his crowning work, *Moses and Monotheism*—Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* and Emanuel Rice's *Freud and Moses*—have found fresh evidence about Freud's parentage to portray him as deeply rooted in Judaism in ways never hinted by Ernest Jones and other early biographers.

An alternative to such revisionism came in 1987 from Peter Gay, in his portrait of Freud as *A Godless Jew*. Gay's title is Freud's own description of himself. A psychoanalytically trained historian of liberal leanings, Gay is eager to damp down the raging question of the Jewish sources of psychoanalysis. Gay's Freud is an apostle of the Enlightenment, a cosmopolitan champion of science over superstition, interested only passingly in Jewishness and racial questions. His picture of Freud the skeptical rationalist is too admiring, and it would be easy to read it as itself a feint, designed to maintain the scientific credit of psychoanalysis at the risk of mythologizing its genesis.

Sander L. Gilman's new brace of books—the Cornell professor writes tomes while lesser mortals are still sharpening their pencils—rejects both the "Judaizing" readings and the "scientific conquistador" renderings of Freud. These two books insist that the "Jewish science" problem cannot be dismissed, but must not be simplified. After all, as Gilman copiously documents, Freud was abidingly exercised by the enigmas of racial identity. Living in the midst of rampant anti-Semitism and aware of the Jewishness of almost all his disciples, he confided to Abraham Kardiner his apprehension that "psychoanalysis would founder because it would go down in history as a 'Jewish science,'" and he strove to forestall that eventuality—hence the importance of Ernest Jones ("the Celt"), to say nothing of the Zurich Protestant Carl Jung ("the Swiss will save us," Freud declared, never a good judge of character).

Freud's Jewishness is thus a live issue. Yet Gilman believes that assertions about the religiosity of Freud's parental milieu in Moravia are ultimately (except for strict Freudians) only small pieces in the jigsaw, while claims about the Talmudic or post-Talmudic roots of theories of the unconscious suffer from the shortcomings of all speculative "influence studies," in which anything can be proved to have influenced anything. Gilman aims to demonstrate the pertinence of Jewishness to Freud's project in concrete ways. He scrutinizes the preoccupations of fin de siècle sciences of man, above all ethnopsychology and biomedicine. What did Jewishness actually mean to Freud's peers? And Gilman investigates Freud's more private motivations. What strategies, he asks, underlay Freud's inscribing of Jewishness within the intellectual structures of psychoanalysis?

Building on his *The Jew's Body*, which appeared in 1991, Gilman emphasizes the profound involvement of turn-of-

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the-century psychiatry with anthropologies and biologies of racial difference. Jewishness was associated with racial traits that appeared in various forms. These were physiological (swarthy skin, hook noses, rat-tail hair), and often pathognomonic: goggle eyes, bandy legs, knock-knees and skin complaints—the *plica polonica*; they were psychological (hypersexuality, a neurasthenic bent); and they were culturally symbolic, notably circumcision, the most telltale "deformity" of all, inescapably suggestive of surgical mutilation and hence of syphilitic infection. Against a backdrop of looming anti-Semitism, it became a reflex gesture, not least for Jewish investigators like the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, to depict Jews as typically sickly and impaired, in ways both small and great. Centuries of sedentary urban life had given the race its comic disposition to hemorrhoids and flat feet, while, on the grand scale, a history of exile had turned it into a strange tribe of marginalized outcasts, whose chronic inbreeding supposedly entailed incest and debased stock.

As explanations of neuropathy, Freud stoutly repudiated all such degenerationist dogmas, decrying vulgar racial-biological hereditarianism. But this is not to say that he repudiated the category of race itself, or denied the palpable realities of racial difference. If Freud went beyond biology, he never forswore that discipline. Gilman thus accepts, up to a point, Frank Sulloway's premise that biology always remained crucial to Freud's thinking, not least in view of his commitment to the Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics, with its postulate that cultural attributes become hereditary and genetically embodied. (He pondered, as did others, whether circumcision itself might evolve into an inborn trait.) Freud, Gilman convincingly argues, never radically repudiated the category of race. There *was* something elemental, if enigmatic, about the Jew's identity. The question was, from what did this differentiation spring? From Judaism as a faith? From language, history or psychology? From racial biology?

Gilman insists that Freud never attempted to single out a unique badge of Jewishness. Yet this did not make Jewishness any less distinctive. Indeed, Gilman adduces evidence that Freud judged the Jewish make-up to be psychopathologically vulnerable. He never challenged contemporary opinion that Jews suffered conspicuously from psychosexual disorders; that they were disposed to hysteria, even to perversion; that the shadow of incest hung over Jewry.

Freud operated within these well-established paradigms of Jewish pathology, but he did not repeat them, he rethought them. He devised entirely new solutions to the problems posed by Jewish difference to the anthropology of the times. He was a Jew; Jewishness was a part of his self. Yet he was also a physician and a scientist. Hence Jewishness was also an object of investigation. Thus Jewishness was self and other, subject and object. Strategies had to be devised allowing it to be embraced and distanced, honored and excluded. Freud had to articulate the ethnic difference of Jewishness, while at the same time insisting upon the Jew's essential sameness.

One ploy, used by Freud and by many of his confreres, lay in the ethnopsychological ruse of labeling "bad Jews." Freud never spoke Yiddish, never learned Hebrew, never supported Zionism; he identified with a German-speaking classical culture that gloried in Greece, the Renaissance, and Enlightenment giants such as Lessing and Goethe. Positioning himself as an acculturated life-member of the European humanist canon, Freud set himself over and against "black" or "Asiatic Jews." Disowning the unacceptable heritage of the ghetto, Freud would occasionally entertain himself with snide remarks about ethnic undesirables ("coarse Jews," "weeds" or "Polish Jews") betrayed by their giveaway Yiddish speech mannerisms (*mauscheln*). By some social evolutionary process, such imperfections had been attenuated among progressive, assimilated Western ("white") Jews. Recourse to such distancing tactics was common at the time. In his *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment*, which was published in 1911, Maurice Fishberg granted that Jews suffered more than gentiles from nervous diseases; yet such disorders, he insisted, were most marked above all among the denizens of Warsaw's Jewish quarter.

In this way Freud deployed ethnopsychology to hold the "bad Jew" at bay. But he also pursued an assimilationist strategy, designed to prove that features customarily regarded as distinctive to the Jewish race were universal to the human race, a collective psychological inheritance. Jews were often singled out for being oversexed; but the truth, Freud insisted, was that the libido was the fundamental human drive. Jews were supposedly incest prone; but the truth was that Oedipal entanglements were intrinsic to all family relations. Jewish males were scarred by circumcision; but the reality was that the fear of castration was a

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ubiquitous dread. The unconscious was "Jewish," in that it was exiled, but it was universally so. In short, Freud coped with the stigma of racial difference by taking features commonly branded as uniquely Jewish, passing them through the looking-glass and revealing them to be omnipresent: the Jew in truth was Everyman. Anti-Semites were thereby caught red-handed in the act of projection.

Through displacements and projections of his own, Freud grappled with his ambivalence toward Jewishness, and attained exceptional insights into disparate modes of comprehending the Other. In a series of provocative discussions, Gilman explores the hidden kindred linking Jews, in Freud's conjectures, to other equivocal groups. Affinities between the feminine and the Jew had long been discussed, not least in Otto Weininger's scandalous *Sex and Character* (1903). Women formed part of *homo sapiens*—was not everyone born bisexual?—but the female, by reason of her particular lack (no penis, only penis envy), was notably different. For Freud, as for many contemporaries, Jews and women shared diverse attributes, being hyperemotional, eroticized (albeit often perversely) and hysterically disposed.

Jews, in other words, were undoubtedly effeminate men, a fact inscribed on their bodies. For through circumcision, the Jewish male, with his mutilated penis, had been feminized, leaving him intermediate between the normative Aryan male and the female, who had no penis at all, or rather a clitoris that was just a "truncated penis." (It was no accident that Viennese slang for clitoris was *Jud*, or Jew.) Postulating this affinity between Jews and women served a double purpose. It solved a riddle of identity, but it also became a device for establishing safe distance. After all, by drawing such inferences, Freud affirmed his superior status as a scientist, the voice of reason (phallic, male) dissecting the partial and the pathological.

Comparable associations connected the Jew and the homosexual in Freud's thinking. If the Jewish male lay somewhere between a full Aryan and a woman, he must be akin to a homosexual. Freud thereby framed the Jew in terms of the homosexual and the homosexual in terms of the Jew. Both occupied anomalous, decentered locations on the grid defining inclusion and otherhood. Freud was doubtless pleased that it was the psychoanalyst's privilege to perceive this, for the analyst himself always risked suspicion of being yet another anomalous, displaced person: during his decade of impassioned friendship with Fliess, Freud anxiously monitored homosexual tendencies of his own.

Gilman's exploration of these ambivalent categories and their meanings is original and penetrating. Unlike certain recent, text-bound, deconstructionist readings, his interpretations capture the unsettling realities (evidenced in Freud's case studies) of a declining Hapsburg empire awash with displaced, disturbed individuals tormented by their origins, disappointed by fate and attempting, through love, ambition or daydreams, to win self-respect against overwhelming obstacles. The terminus, in so many cases, was neurosis and the couch.

Gilman's analyses shed light upon often ignored aspects of Freud's writings. Take the case of Daniel Paul Schreber, the Dresden judge whose psychosis led to fourteen years' confinement in mental institutions. As he recounted in his *Memoirs* (1903), Schreber believed he was being tortured, unmanned and "fucked by God." Freud interpreted Schreber's paranoia as a classic case of repressed homosexuality, like the case of the Rat Man; and orthodox psychoanalytic exegeses have followed suit. Recent historians, by contrast, have highlighted the fact that Schreber's father, Moritz, was the illustrious, or notorious, inventor of the fiendish orthopedic contraptions tested out upon his son: Schreber's "fantasies" of torture, it is argued, were material memories of child abuse suffered at parental hands.

Gilman offers a further view. Addressing neglected sections of the *Memoirs*, he shows that the deranged Schreber was obsessed by the dread of being turned

The Lost Birds of Venice

The hotel entrance was painted green—faux marble.
Our rooms perched on a dead-end street
and backed on a dead canal.
Our walls were spotted as if with moldy roses.

Pigeons warred in arcs across the great piazza,
scolding, in their ragged voices,
the four bronze chargers
who peered down shyly, like carousel horses,

from the balcony of San Marco
("a warty bug out for a stroll," suggested Twain).
Where were the fevered songbirds of Venice?
Wing chairs perched in the echoing palazzo.

Gilt frames were layered with gondolas,
with preposterous mob-capped doges,
the glass-cheeked pages and jealous senators,
the minor bribed officials,

and, as an afterthought,
nothing scarred into an afterthought of sky.
A boy lounging in a gondola,
slightly removed from the procession on Ascension Day,

bored, at ease with youth, with a mild
unafflicted plunder of possibility,
without thought of the black-cloaked sailors,
the quiet removal to one of the outer islands,

stared into the choppy lagoon,
where the waves—wavelets, really—
were whited in like wood shavings.
Inverted v's!

As if the lost birds of Venice
had tired of flying, flying forever,
and plunged in on the melted wings of Icarus,
glad that they must die.

WILLIAM LOGAN

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into an "ugly" Jew (becoming effeminate, degenerate and unmanned, while taking perverse delight in cross-dressing). For a respectable German magistrate, steeped in anti-Semitic sentiments, such a fate was too horrible to contemplate. The fascinating point is that Schreber's tormented relationship to Jewishness, profusely documented in his *Memoirs*, is nowhere discussed by Freud. Perhaps Schreber's attitude to this (self-inflicted) Jewishness was too discomfiting. The analysis of his sexual transformations may have served as a substitute code for racial undertones that Freud chose not to handle.

Both *Freud, Race and Gender* and *The Case of Sigmund Freud* display all the familiar hallmarks of Gilman's formidable scholarship. Duplicating themselves remarkably little, they are richly erudite in the small print of medico-scientific writings of the fin de siècle era, showing Freud as a child of his times. Both volumes are illuminating about hidden agendas as well as articulated opinions, and they display a shrewd grasp of overt and implicit intellectual strategies. As in his earlier writings, Gilman highlights the key roles of labeling and classification in the constitution of bodies of knowledge. Building on formulations offered in his earlier *Difference and Pathology* (1985) and *Disease and Representation* (1988), he tabulates schemes of identity and alterity, the normal and the psychopathological, that highlight the equivocations of Freud's self/other Jewish double-act. Confronting Jewishness, Freud had to own himself as both patient and physician, problem and solution.

Some will find Gilman's preoccupations with race and pathology distasteful, but he can hardly be blamed for exposing the underbelly of the modern mind. To be sure, these books are not without flaws. Some avenues of inquiry seem overingenious—as, for instance, Gilman's attempt to demonstrate that Freud's cancer of the mouth elicited particularly Jewish anxieties. And, as with some of his earlier works, both of these books read more like a barrage of ideas than like fully fashioned wholes. It is an impression aggravated by the lack of any real "conclusion" to *Freud, Race and Gender*, where the reader is finally left without a measured evaluation of the importance of fin de siècle racial biology and ethnopsychology for Freud's theoretical edifice.

Still, these works point to new directions for Freud studies. Gilman refuses to accord Freud a privileged, heroic status; he is properly treated as one (the most fascinating one) of a bunch of biopsychological speculators around the turn of the century. Moreover, Gilman transcends the ultimately sterile disputes, fanned by the recent Masson controversy, regarding the birth of psychoanalysis, and, by implication, its truth and Freud's integrity. In Gilman's vision, psychoanalysis is notable primarily as a plotting of the inner self and a map of social personality. The intriguing implication is that, in historical perspective, psychoanalysis will come to be seen less as the authentic science of the psyche than as one of many late-Victorian quests for identity.

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Shadow Play

BY MARC ROBINSON

Ghosts by John Banville

(Knopf, 245 pp., $21)

The suspense novel is a brooding, capricious creature under John Banville's care. The crime has already occurred, the guilty have already been imprisoned and released, the ostensible mystery has been solved and filed. What remains are the memories and persistent questions of the criminal himself—he alone still not sure what happened and why; still expecting, long after others have moved on to new challenges, that the true meaning of his crime will surface, and that from it he can determine the shape of his future. The criminal in *Ghosts*, the same man who narrates Banville's engrossing previous novel, *The Book of Evidence*, never does learn the significance of his deed, a murder. But he keeps trying, looking for clues in every encounter, every moment of repose in which some object as yet unnoticed assumes a sudden, brilliant aura. And Banville keeps us hovering nearby—filled with anticipation ourselves, watching closely for something that will make all the various pieces of his story cohere. In the process, he sinks us deep into the consciousness of a character who is weary, cynical, certain of his moral emptiness yet unable to stop thinking about himself.

In *The Book of Evidence*, Freddie Montgomery wrote from his jail cell of the escalating desperation that led him one day to steal a friend's Dutch Master painting, and then to bludgeon to death the maid who accidentally witnessed his theft. In the new novel, Banville forces Freddie to go unnamed: he is now burdened with an anonymity that confirms his bleached, hollowed-out state. Recently out of jail and working as a research assistant for an old art historian (he enjoys the irony), he lives on a thinly populated island which is near enough to the mainland to be comfortable, but is also detached, frozen, inward-looking. His narrative voice shares these qualities, yet also still has the bitter edge from *The Book of Evidence*, as though he keeps it sharpened to remind him of old identities, forsaken allegiances, the errors and the petty victories of his past. Freddie (if one may return to him his name) rarely speaks aloud to other characters but maintains a running inner commentary, casting everything he sees in a cold, unflattering light. Suspended as he is in the middle of the sea, his private talk is the only thing that gives him any sense of being present.

Such security is short-lived: no sooner has Freddie uttered to himself a phrase capping a bit of self-examination, or found the eloquent words to preserve in his memory a sudden perception, than his words float away—and he must start over, as though shorn of all language. Since no one hears what he thinks, his thoughts may be fated to obsolescence, never validated by others in the give-and-take of conversation. Banville himself seems to share this worry: apart from its considerable interest on its own, this sequel can be seen also as Banville's attempt to sever his ties to a character who has grown more compelling than the author ever expected—to stare down a character who has gone beyond possessing Banville's imagination to the point of being possessive. The ghosts of the title are Banville's own. Like Freddie, Banville seems unable to acquire thorough, comprehensive knowledge of

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his own story. He can't feel confident or sated. There are always more details to amass, more shadings and subtleties to observe. The real mystery—who is this character? what is it like to live fully within the character's skin and see things through his eyes?—will never be solved. One novel wasn't enough to give him his due.

Banville's doubts about knowledge began well before *Ghosts*. His pair of early novels about science—*Doctor Copernicus* (1976) and *Kepler* (1981), both just reissued in paperback—upset expectations for heroic tales of discovery, the kind that are found in all those biographical novels that recount each thrilling gasp on the royal road to revelation. Instead Banville described the scientists' solitary days of gaping numb confusion, the manifold distractions, the ongoing inner din of questions about whether the intellectual pursuit is worth the effort. From these characters, Banville learned that the act of inquiry never ends. As Copernicus skillfully debunked archaic notions of the universe, he worried about how life can continue without an all-encompassing mythology, a system of belief and a faith in perfectibility that his own tentative ideas could not provide. Kepler's confidence in mathematics as an organizing tool was persuasive, its promise of certainty alluring—yet even his most ingenious equations could not explain away the pain of successive personal tragedies that occupied the center of Banville's novel.

The characters in *Ghosts* no longer try to decipher, or even to find, the general scheme of the universe. They have learned that none exists, that all available master plans are deceptive, dishonest about their adequacy, not subtle enough. The art historian's "definitive" monograph will never be completed. Freddie's sense of purpose dwindles instead of crystallizes. Here, rather than even entertain fantasies of seeing the world whole, Banville's characters restrict themselves to small, contained, static places where they can gaze into corners and wait—wait for suppositions to change to facts, unprodded by telescopes, compasses, even the fancy gadgets of the curious mind. If anything happens with regularity in *Ghosts*, it is the steady accumulation of variations on a set theme: Banville studies his scene from many angles, sets the pictures side by side and wonders if any one of them is true.

But what does happen in *Ghosts*? A group of people turns up on the island, forced to stop over a night when their sightseeing boat runs aground, and drag themselves through to the tail end of day-old entanglements with one another. But that, in itself, isn't of interest: in fact, despite the forced camaraderie brought about by the close quarters, everyone in *Ghosts* seems irretrievably isolated, willfully lost in private zones of contemplation, stewing in anger or fear or dull impatience. There's almost no movement in *Ghosts*—not even the bustling of characters pacing around waiting to go home, which in itself might impersonate a plot. The whole novel feels caught in the throat. Just when such reserve might get irritating, the picture is clarified: clarified *as* a picture. For after all, it shouldn't be surprising that a novel narrated by a man fascinated by painting will aspire to become a painting itself—silent, held in place, entrancing, yet strangely untouchable.

Thinking visually, Banville always sets up his composition before letting the narrative move forward. He allows himself paragraphs to describe the placement of characters in space, measure their distance from one another, fill in the backdrop, note down what is visible out the window and where the light falls—and then, only then, does he let someone speak or move. It is as if Banville believed that if a writer devoted himself solely and sensitively to arranging the elements of his story, then larger, resonant themes would be effortlessly revealed—and would be more persuasive for seeming so accidental.

Banville frames only partial views of people, the inevitable technique of a writer who has lost faith in omniscience. Here are random-seeming accumulations, brilliant daubs barely suggesting figures. Banville glances at people and writes the effect of the glance alone, the remembered flash. A young woman named Flora spends long hours asleep, or stares with glazed, ravished incomprehension at the few who succeed in meeting her eye. Sophie, older and harder, sighs, smokes, tends to her twisted ankle, is suspicious and somehow already aware of things yet to occur. Felix, who once knew the art historian, and who dangles his secret knowledge above the others with teasing malice, is a lascivious con, emaciated and hunched like a particularly resentful heron. There are others—children and a beguiling old man—yet no character is able to help us see any other more fully. Banville offers only clues about his characters—evidence that they exist and are present somewhere in the novel, in hiding, as though nervous about suffering a reader's sustained attention.

Banville suggests an alternative, and more appropriate, way to read his novel in a passage about a painter named Vaublin, the art historian's subject:

> He speaks in one of his last letters of coming to the realization that the center of the painting, that packed point of equilibrium out of which every element of the composition flows and where at the same time everything is ingathered, is never where it seems it should be, is never central, or obviously significant, but could be a patch of sky, a fold of a gown, a dog scratching its ear, anything.

The act of looking for that "point," in fact, is Banville's subject—as are all the emotions and tensions that accompany such a task. *Ghosts* is structured by a series of encounters—none of them "important" in terms of advancing a story or clarifying a relationship, but each charged with the kind of anxiety felt by those wondering if the encounter *might* be important, revelatory of something not yet even imagined. Banville lets his novel idle as he isolates the moment of seeing, bringing his eye closer by degrees to the scene of an encounter, until it can be studied in quadrants. Licht, another of the historian's assistants, sees Alice, one of the castaways:

> He had not been able to look at her this closely before now. She might have been a new species of something that had alighted at his side. He could hear her breathing. Each time that she blinked, her eyelashes rested for an instant on the soft rise of her cheek. She had a smell like the mingled smell of milk and pencil shavings.

Such passages work peculiar, exciting changes on the receptive reader: Banville seduces us into a disciplined attentiveness, encourages reflection upon seemingly unimportant things. The glittering movements of the sea's surface start to assume a pattern and a perceptible rhythm; the creaks and pings of the house soon sound like code. Reading Banville, our pulse slows down.

The extraordinary self-possession of Banville's prose, though, makes one wonder just what, if anything, is at stake. A current of desperation does, in fact, run beneath the surface calm, as characters clutch at each sensation or memory, believing perhaps that it alone will buoy them, and help them get home. Although he never says as much, Freddie seems to tread the water of his own memory in order to delay the onset of his future. For him, there is nothing to look forward to, no intrigue to continue, no relationship to

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tighten or sever. The most exhilarating time of his life—the crime and its punishment—are behind him. The very blankness of his future frightens him, as though he were expecting some waiting inquisitor, someone who, years hence, is bound to ask him reproachfully whatever became of his life.

Freddie tightens the focus on himself in order to claim some weight in a world of fleeting sensations and impalpable ghosts. He squints until he sees only a single, hazy point of light, in which he hopes to discover himself. So, too, with Banville, whose novel steadily contracts, chapter after chapter, until it reaches a luminous section devoted to looking at one of Vaublin's paintings, almost an idealized image of the relationships among the novel's characters.

Reading all of *Ghosts* is something more than looking at a painting, though. After a while, the experience is akin to staring for a long time into a mirror, watching one's face turn from something known into something unknown. The stranger staring back looks menacing, yet also fearful; alien, yet also inappropriately intimate, as though it knows more about its viewer than it's letting on. The longer one looks in the mirror the more absorbing the experience—but also the more unnerving: What is that? Something that had always been an ungraspable phenomenon—a reflection, mere light and air—starts to seem present in three aggressive dimensions.

Banville's technique in working this spell is deceptive. His sentences are voluptuous sequences of color and texture, exquisitely balanced constructions of external description and internal meditation. Yet such workmanship is not baroque. Rather, the accumulation of observations seems part of Banville's effort to strip away—to tear off the layers of received wisdom with the acid of fresh perception. He confounds obvious associations, jiggles favorite delicate metaphors, obstructs well-known angles of perception and detours us toward unvisited promontories. Some of Banville's sentences dare us to reconcile contradictory descriptions: someone is "affably menacing"; liquor "chills" but also "scalds"; a room's silence "thuds." By writing this way, Banville may be hoping to catch his subjects off guard, when they're not self-conscious or presenting themselves as they (and we) would like them to be, and instead can be seen for what they really are, each thing unlike any other thing. In every paragraph, Banville reveals how earnestly he's working to coax his novel's characters and objects forward from the recesses of his imagination into the light of ours, where then the many audacious descriptions can fall away and his ghosts will become a novel's full-fledged subjects. Freddie considers Flora:

> As she talked I found myself looking at her and seeing her as if for the first time, not as a gathering of details, but all of a piece, solid and singular and amazing.... She was simply there, an incarnation of herself, no longer a nexus of adjectives but a pure and present noun.... And somehow by being suddenly herself like this she made the things around her be there too.... As I sat with my mouth open and listened to her I felt everyone and everything shiver and shift, falling into vividest forms, detaching themselves from me and my conception of them and changing themselves instead into what they were, no longer figment, no longer mystery, no longer a part of my imagining.

Banville creates the impression that his novel is coming into being only at the moment we are reading it—that it is still moving from blur to focus. This movement keeps the intensity of his writing from seeming claustrophobic; *Ghosts* seems bottomless, or horizonless. Objects and people may settle into view, but the questions they suggest go unanswered. By the end we still don't know why Freddie is so interested in the castaways. At one point he says that he hopes to reconstitute some facsimile of the woman he killed. But as he speaks, he also seems aware that no such restitution will happen. He can't even conjure her in his memory. No sooner does he glimpse a figure—and feel anew the implication of his violence—than the picture dissolves ... and he stands alone, slightly nauseous, blinking, chewing the inside of his mouth, as if to be sure of at least his ability to feel pain.

Banville writes deeply brewed fiction. From the mere water of sensation and contemplation he makes something dark, strong, bracing, warm. He knows, though, that what he sets before us is still water. The most tangible things in *Ghosts* seem like abstractions, hallucinations. Banville is an obsessive writer, but he doesn't claim what obsesses him; he invokes and discreetly points to his vast subjects rather than welcoming them in as familiars. One cannot use the hackneyed reviewer's standby "haunting" here (despite the novel's title). *Ghosts* is here and not here; achingly beautiful, momentarily transporting and gone.

MARC ROBINSON, who teaches dramatic literature at Yale University, is the editor of the forthcoming *Altogether Elsewhere: Writings from Exile* (Faber & Faber).

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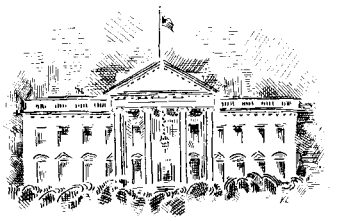
Wouldn't normally do

I WENT TO SEE *PHILADELPHIA* twice, and, in retrospect, I'm glad I did. The first time, I went with a bunch of gay friends—a bevy of professional and mainly closeted people who are not usually given to holding back criticism. We all cried at the apposite points, of course. The movie is a tear-jerker even if you haven't seen a large proportion of your friends go down various parts of the HIV slide in their 20s and 30s. But we all agreed over margaritas later that the film was essentially a disappointing made-for-television special, with cartoon characters and cartoon morality. We winced at the sanitization of the main character's relationship; at the way the movie glibly divided humanity into those who were good, those who were bad, and those who were on their way from being bad to being good; at the excruciating moralizing of the courtroom and family scenes. It didn't capture our experience of the plague, its evocation of a common mortality, its descents into comedy, its nagging constancy, its gray-shaded dignity and indignity. It was a film in garish primary colors, directed at "them," and, we generally agreed, good for "them." As we experienced it, however, it crammed complicated thoughts into crude parables; explained medical facts that had become numbingly familiar; teetered unnecessarily around every gay activist sensitivity (giving a few of them bit-parts to buy them off); and mollified every squeamish heterosexual as well. The result was a strangely distant communiqué of moral and social uplift, in which the people involved (insofar as the characters were at all recognizable as people) were mere ciphers in an elaborate attempt at enlightenment directed at "them."

THE SECOND TIME I WENT TO THE movie, I went with one of "them," a straight woman friend of mine, who had had little direct experience of HIV and who had known a few gay men, but mostly through me. I have to say that, despite my best efforts, I experienced the movie very differently. My defenses, I suppose, were down. I was acutely aware throughout of what she might be thinking and feeling, of which scenes were distortive of my and others' lives, of which were not, of how she would see and interpret things that had become so familiar they had ceased even to be visible to me. For a couple of hours, I was given the chance to see the movie as if I had not somehow already acted in it; and it reminded me of the shock we had now absorbed, of the fear we had grown inured to, of the human noise that in our lives had turned increasingly white.

BUT *PHILADELPHIA*, ON FURTHER reflection, did more than this. Despite (and sometimes because of) its Hollywood banality, it was surprisingly true. From its soundtrack on, it insisted on the commonality of the gay and straight experience. Bruce Springsteen's elegiac title song, "Streets of Philadelphia," is the first popular song ever, I think, to be sung by a straight man in the voice of a gay man. The movie also portrayed a homosexual emphatically as a member of a heterosexual family. This is a truth that is extremely hard to convey in words, but that the film, more than any before it, placed at its center. It succinctly showed that gay people are not so much a problem for straight families; they *are* straight families. The movie conveyed this by a simple film-school cliché: we saw some scenes through the lens of a hand-held camera operated by Miguel, Andrew Beckett's lover; and in the final sentimental minutes, we watched old home movies of Beckett as a child. Sure, the moments could have been culled from "America's Saddest Home Videos." But the second time I saw the movie, I realized that the medium itself in those scenes had conveyed something subliminally that is almost impossible to persuade people of explicitly. It had made the family context normal.



SECOND, THIS MOVIE ABOUT AIDS was directed at black America. From its black co-star, Denzel Washington, to its hype in the black press, to a number of critical black-on-black scenes, it was an aggressively black, middle-class film. (In downtown Washington, it was shown in the theater usually reserved for blaxploitation movies.) Moreover, it didn't talk of the disease as a heterosexual issue, as Magic Johnson and virtually every other black leader has done. It brazenly took a black, straight movie icon and made him grapple with a gay man. Denzel Washington's role for this reason took far more social bravery than Hanks's. Homosexuality is more stigmatized in black America than even in white America, which is why attempts at a coalition between gays and blacks have so far proved futile. But in the theater, I could overhear a straight, black couple sitting behind me become completely involved in the fate of a white homosexual. And the movie's most visceral portrayal of a straight man's panic around a gay man was in a scene where two handsome, intelligent black men—one gay, one straight—clash in a drug store. The point about sexuality in this interchange was somewhat labored. But the message about race had already been made.

PHILADELPHIA, IN short, is a work of translation, not creation; and for that reason more than any others, it is unsettling. To those who simply don't want to know, it's an irritation; to those who know too much, it's an affront. But translation has to start somewhere; and it is infinitely preferable to a silent separatism. It is also needed. The truth is that in the last few years, after a period of remarkable convergence, the gay world and the straight world may be diverging again. Now, however, the issue is not sexuality, it's mortality. To enter young adulthood as a gay man today is to be initiated into a different world than that of your straight peers. It is to be forced to confront perishability in a manner that most heterosexuals are spared until their 70s and 80s. Death of course is no stranger to straight people; and it's a dangerous illusion to believe that gay death, or young death, or HIV death is somehow different from any other kind; and blinkered, too, to believe that straight people are not involved in this event as well. But the sheer extent of it for gay men, its seamlessness, its oppressiveness, its insistence, its ubiquity, have surely changed them for good. Whether this experience is a horror or a privilege, an intensification of life or a diversion from it, is an interesting question. But the experience is certainly a different one; and the difference may well be greater than that of sexuality. The wider the gulf becomes of course, the harder it is to translate but the wider it becomes, the more important it is to translate. *Philadelphia* is a beginning to that process; and we should be glad of it. The present is a foreign country for many of us now. Increasingly, we need correspondents.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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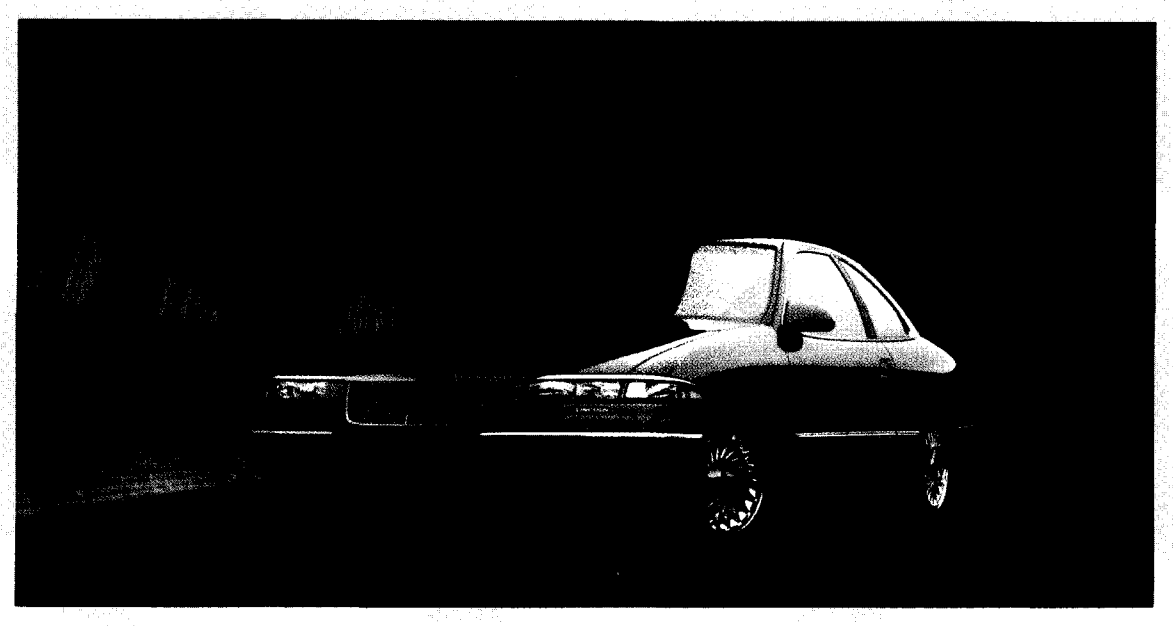

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